

## Starting Strong - Supporting Programs In Start-Up - Audio Cast

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

Terry: Good afternoon, my name is Terry and I will be your conference operator today. At this time I would like to welcome everyone to the Starting Strong: Supporting Programs and Start-Up conference call. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. During the Q and A portion of the call, all questions will be anonymous.

If you would like to ask a question during this time, simply press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. If you would like to withdraw your question, press the pound key. Thank you. Miss Amanda Perez, you may begin your conference.

Amanda Perez: Thank you so much, Terry. And I want to welcome everyone -- hello, hi to everyone out there. You are joined on the line today with federal staff and training and technical assistance providers from across the country. We want to let you know, also, that this call is being taped for possible use in the future. So, as we go through introductions, I also want to call your attention to the materials that are available on the EHS NRC web site.

I -- I hope that you have all gotten the chance to print those out, but if not, here is the address. It's [www.ehsnrc.org](http://www.ehsnrc.org), and those materials are right on the -- are right on the homepage there. If you have not printed those out, go ahead and so as we are getting through the beginning part of the call. I'm going to let Angie Godfrey, the Infant/Toddler Specialist at the Office of Head Start, get us started. Angie?

Angie Godfrey: Thank you, Amanda. And I would just like to welcome everyone, also. It's such an exciting time, and I think we're so close to funding Early Head Start. So it's also a very timely call. Start-up is -- is crucial whether you're an existing program or a new program. It's just a wonderful time to plan -- to plan together. And I know that the next few months are going to be so busy for everyone, and I'm just glad we're taking the time today to think about the work that needs to be done and how we want to go about the work. So welcome to everyone.

Amanda: Thank you so much, Angie. And we have some -- some other experts on our panel for you to hear from today and I'm going to have them introduce themselves, as well. Linda Broyles, let's get started with you.

Linda Broyles: Good afternoon, my name is Linda Broyles and I direct Early Childhood Services in an extremely rural area of southeast Kansas. We serve 850 children in 12 counties. That covers about 7,300 square miles. We're in a community action agency and we've had the three-to-five program since the late '60s, and then, due to the families that we serve and the community assessment, we decided we needed to look at earlier services and we applied for and received an Early Head Start grant in 1998.

We have both home- and center-based services, and we also have child care partners. We only had Early Head Start in six of our 12 counties and we've applied for federal expansion for the other six. Since we've had an existing organizational structure, this expansion doesn't seem nearly as scary or daunting to us as it did the first time around because we have a lot of folks on staff who've have done this start-up work before. So, as a result, and in anticipation of a successful application, we did lots of planning up front.

Amanda: Linda, we are so glad to have you with us. Judy Ham?

Judy Ham: Good afternoon. Denver, Colorado, and we're honored to be a part of this call and the opportunity to talk about our experiences. We are Cerebral Palsy of Colorado. We've been around 60-some years. We've been doing what we considered early intervention and prevention work for most of that time. So when Head Start first became available to us for Aurora, Colorado, we pursued it and were awarded the grant in '97.

In '98 we then decided we would pursue Early Head Start and, although we serve almost 700 children a year, we have learned a lot about our work from the Early Head Start/Head Start process. And that is that children's needs are different today, family needs are different today. We felt very ready to do the early intervention services that were -- are required or necessary in Early Head Start and felt our experience, by being an early intervention organization, would prepare us.

However, we found that it's -- it's grown more and more challenging providing a child a g-tube or supporting them with physical therapies still is warranted and necessary. But it's the other needs of the children that -- social, emotional -- that we are really challenged by today. However, we feel like what we do is -- is critical work and -- and we're thrilled to have the opportunity to do it.

Amanda: Judy, we're so glad to have you on the call, thank you for being here. Judy: Thank you.

Amanda: And -- and sort of as we -- as we have introduced these key program staff, I want you all to know that in planning for this audio conference we talked with program staff from all over the country who had experienced start-up. And for our panel today we picked two very different programs and two very different communities, but we do want to recognize that the federal and TA staff on the line today are serving programs who differ widely according to their experiences, their proposed programs, their communities, their available resources.

And we want to recognize that part of the work that you all are doing is learning about individual programs or resources and needs, individualizing support for them, all those things. We are so delighted to have both Judy and Linda with us and we hope that their experiences will be helpful to you as you all serve a really diverse group of folks. I also want to introduce Sarah Semlak, Sarah?

Sarah Semlak: Hi, I'm Sarah Semlak and I'm an Early Childhood Consultant coming out of Washington, D.C. I'm very pleased to be a part of this "new wave" of Early Head Start because I have been working with Early Head Start since the earlier "waves" in the mid '90s. Prior to actually -- actually becoming a part of the Early Head Start family, I -- I discovered the Parent and Child Center programs in the early '90s.

And as I think about us moving forward with this incredible expansion now of the infant/toddler and services to pregnant women, I think about several things, one of which is, of course, just the -- the -- as -- as was just described by Amanda, diversity of the grantees in terms of where they're located. From my own experiences as a start-up planner, I've worked on both coasts and at different periods of time.

So, both looking at the 'waves' -- one and two -- I -- I actually did some start-up on the west coast and something that -- that I, as we've been preparing for this call, really came to appreciate is the -- is the difference in the amount of -- of resource that, I think on a national level, we had at that time as we looked at, you know, supporting programs in start-up as compared to now.

Something else, as I think about my experience and our discussion today, is I did have an opportunity to not only work as a start-up planner more from the technical assistance side, but that I was also at the Head Start Bureau back in the mid '90s, and had an opportunity to travel out to all 12 regions and to, at that point, give support to the federal staff around what the revised Performance Standards meant.

And actually listening to them really work very hard to appreciate what our Standards meant and how they played out at a time where, again, on a national level, we just didn't know what true equality services for infants and toddlers might look like -- whether it was the home-based, the center-based, the family child care.

So I'm very excited as we move forward to kind of look at where we've come and kind of, you know, have a rich discussion over the next 90 minutes of where we're headed in this process of -- of supporting these programs moving forward. So, thank you, Amanda. Amanda: Sarah, we are so glad to have you and to have the benefit of the richness of your experience with us here today as well. Thank you for being here. Sarah: Thank you.

Amanda: As we begin, I'm hoping that Angie -- I'm going to ask Angie to talk about the role of federal staff in start-up

and -- and trainers and technical assistance staff in start-up. So Angie?

Angie: Yes, Amanda, thank you. I -- you know, it's so important how folks work together, and one of the things I was thinking as I was coming over today for the call is that the strongest programs that I've seen and -- and some of the most impressive services in terms of quality and in terms of -- of meeting the -- the Early Head Start regulations, really came as a result of, definitely, the hard work of the program but the hard work of a partnership of the program, their federal program specialists, and the TA staff that worked with them.

And it really -- all of those things need to be a part of success for programs, and it's particularly important in the beginning and in planning. And folks are going to hear over the next few weeks, they're going to be getting their letters about the programs that -- and the services that they're going to be offering. And in many cases they may not look like what they applied for. They may be serving in different numbers, they may not be serving in all of the counties or at all of the sites they thought.

So it's going to be so important that they do some thoughtful planning and, in some cases, some rethinking of how they're going to provide services. And it -- it will happen and it will be strongest when it's done in this partnership of programs -- federal and technical assistance. So hopefully this call will give federal staff and T and TA staff some valuable skills and information that, as programs begin to plan for -- for offering services, that they will be able to move a little more quickly toward full implementation of quality services.

Amanda: That's such an important place for us to begin, I think, as we are thinking about start-up and the audience we have out there. I thank you so much, Angie. Now, before we get started, I'm hearing a beeping. Does one of you hear it? Does one of you have a beeping in your space?

Linda: It -- no, you know, it actually sounds, at least for me, as though it's over the line, as though it's a part of the phone system but maybe that's just my take on it. Amanda: Terry, do you know what that beeping is? Terry: I do not know, the only lines open are the speaker lines.

Amanda: Okay, well, we'll continue and hopefully it -- hopefully that will go away. Angie: Yeah, that -- it is strange.

Amanda: So, let's start with Sarah, sort of in -- as we continue this conversation. And Sarah, in your experience as a start-up planner, can you talk a little bit about the process? Can you talk about where start-up begins and where it ends?

Sarah: Okay, and I'm going to as -- as we're kind of going through our -- our 90 minutes together here, just refer folks, as I'm kind of responding, to some of the supplementary materials that you sent along to folks and referenced at the beginning of the call, because I think they're really helpful, not only to help, you know, me to respond but also for folks as they come back to realize that one of the materials you sent actually is an Early Head Start Tip Sheet on start-up.

So I looked at that and just kind of reflected for myself, as someone who's been a start-up planner, to think about the major milestones in the start-up process. And so as that document mentions just on the grant application itself, and looking at the most current RFP, it was interesting just to see, as we think about start-up, what the bottom line is -- what it is that these programs, these 500-plus new grants were asked to do.

And I think as a start-up planner something that was an "aha" moment for me was to -- to make sure I understood if I was the person who wrote the grant, was I the person within the agency, or was I a consultant being brought in to use somebody else's grant, to then help with guiding the start-up process. Because I think just that piece of the process is going to vary across these -- these new, you know, grantees, and for start-up we have to take that into account.

Because if it is a grant that was written outside of the agency, and even though the awards are coming perhaps, you know, four to six months beyond the time the grant was submitted, there can be some changes, there can be some lack of understanding of what, you know, somebody else wrote about the community assessment.

And the needs, which in fact maybe don't really pertain or -- or they were understood differently because it was a consultant as compared to somebody within an agency who is now in the -- in the throes of receiving the grant and trying to figure out next steps. So, I think, in my experience as a start-up planner, just beginning with that grant and asking the right questions -- figuring out who and what so that you can move forward.

Also, another milestone that's listed in that document is when programs have received the notification on funding -- and it's something that as a start-up planner, but then also as I traveled into some of the regional offices, experienced the negotiating period -- that whatever was in that grant, what's the reality now?

And how are we actually, as you know Angie has mentioned, going to be working together as a team to grow these programs, to negotiate up front that -- for example, center-based, as we know, is an expensive option, and if there was supposed to be partnership with child care who, for whatever reason, the memorandum of understanding wasn't valid or it wasn't, you know, it isn't -- no longer being -- you know --acknowledged or whatever -- that there is that negotiation that's going to really then influence, depending on the situation, moving forward with start-up.

Another milestone beyond that negotiating and -- and the grant writing is that planning period. And it's the largest chunk, as we know, of the start-up period. But I think it's, again as a planner, making sure that before I even went on site, that I asked the right questions; that I made sure that the grantee had a team together; that I would be meeting with people that represented the parent population that was going to be served, the community reps if this was an agency that didn't have Head Start or Early Head Start.

So again, I know we're going to be working with a range of programs that are going to -- some of them stand alone, some not. But I think, again, that whole how the planning period will progress, or what potential challenges people may face also just comes from -- is there a team? Who's going to be maintaining the timeline for activities around the start-up? Who's going to actually be monitoring to make sure when the deadline for early service delivery is going to take place, that -- that everything is there?

I mean we -- we of course want our grantees at all times to stay connected with their federal staff and to continue to have strong connections with their technical assistants. But I think that final stage -- that stage four of, "Okay. You've planned and now you're implementing. So you've got to do it." So that jumping off was -- as a start-up planner, sometimes I was surprised. I thought programs would be so excited about offering their first socialization or their first morning of opening the center.

When, in fact, they were constantly asking, "Are we really ready?" Or having that socialization and nobody comes. Or the center that wasn't finished so that they are being relocated in a church basement, and that there wasn't transportation money put in the grant so they can't necessarily get all the parents there, and that staff is discouraged.

So I think as a start-up planner, using a document like the Organizational Readiness Chart, or something to really help steer and -- and help programs recognize milestones that sometimes feel like they're -- they're very few and far between is going to be important. But also, some document or vehicle by which the team can be working together to get through that start-up and beyond.

Amanda: And we're really going to be talking more about the Organizational Readiness Chart as we go through this. And I -- you know, what I'm hearing and what you're saying is that this is sort of a process that never begins and never ends, it's sort of -- is part of the cycle... Sarah: Yeah.

Amanda:...of what programs are dealing with, and we certainly have heard that in our conversations with Linda and Judy, and just an understanding that this is an ongoing piece of the work that programs are doing. We are going to actually turn to page 5 in your materials if we can do that. And there's a page there: What Are the Steps Associated with start-up Planning?

Now, in my conversations with panalists here, it has been really clear that the process is messier than the term "steps" imply -- implies. But we can talk about these maybe as the four activities of start-up. And here they are: so the first one is identifying resources; the second one is reviewing and developing management systems and procedures; the

third is preparing for program activities; and the fourth piece, then, is implementation.

Recognizing that the programs that you all are serving are early in this process, so early. We are using the first three steps to provide some structure for this discussion as you can see then from the agenda. And we are going to start with this conversation with identifying resources. So let's begin where organizations need to begin and that's, of course, with the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

We know that these regulations guide programs. Actually, they're not optional like many resources are, but because they're guiding, they do offer critical information, structure and support to programs in the beginning, of course. Judy, can you talk about the way you experienced the Performance Standards when you were first getting started?

Judy: I sure can. I think, initially -- shocked by the depth and the wealth within them. I think that we early recognized that they were the gold standard and that this -- these were all the things we want to do -- should do -- and that we'll have outcomes and benefits for families. I think that our initial step was to break them down. And when you develop the work plan you really have an opportunity to go through and figure out all the Performance Standards and how they relate.

And I think it also allowed us to look at what the intent is of an integrated process. And we were befuddled at first, when we did that first work plan and went through the Performance Standards. We were befuddled by how to integrate because there was so much overlap.

And I think any help you can give as consultants and technical assistance folks is to really help people understand how to cross over those content areas and how to understand that there may be a -- within the work plan and within the Performance Standards -- it seems like a lot of duplication, but it really does force and cause you to be an integrated effort.

And so the payoff was huge. It was laborious, especially for a brand new start-up program to go through all those Performance Standards, but it was well worth it. And it is the gold standard, and it continues to be so.

Amanda: Yes, and you told me, Judy, that the Head Start Program Performance Standards -- I'm quoting here -- "The Head Start Performance Standards are the best thing that ever happened to early education," is what you told me. And certainly to work with infants and toddlers and their families, expectant families, as well.

Judy: Well, we all end up siloing and -- and we became -- we were specialists in the early days in OT and special ed and speech, but there's so much more than that. That's a component of, you know, of what you do to -- to help develop a -- a child and their -- and to help that family. So, it really was a eye -- eye opener for us, and especially for organizations who perhaps haven't had the, you know, that particular interest.

They have another interest, maybe it's family work. But you have to really integrate all those components in order for it to really be successful. And that's where resources come into play so much because if you can't do it, you have to identify the resources that perhaps can help you do it.

Amanda: Yes, and we've heard, sort of in talking with folks, the importance of putting together sort of a start-up planning team which is a, you know, a group of folks who can really help structure and plan the services required under those Performance Standards and look at how they apply to expectant families and infants and toddlers and their families. Judy and Linda, just looking at your program we know you come to start-up with very different expertise.

So Judy, you've been talking a lot about an organization that has a long legacy of providing services to children with disabilities. And historically, we know that a lot of stand-alone programs do come out of -- grow out of early intervention. So we have a sense that -- that that's true this time, as well with the folks that who have applied. What did you find in this process of identifying folks for your start-up team? And that's a question for you, Judy.

Judy: For the start-up team? Amanda: So you were looking internally at your staff. You had this focus on OTs and -- and speech pathologists and the folks that you had on staff as real experts on infant and toddler -- infant and toddler

development, yes?

Judy: Right, I -- I think that when you are focused, as we were, on developmental services, you -- we -- we missed that comprehensive early education component. So we really needed to seek out resources that could help us really look at what are you going to do in a birth-to-three full-day program with children? What are you going to -- what's your curriculum? What are -- what are the best resources available to you in terms of developing that?

And we found that a lot of people who thought they were infant/tod specialists were indeed in the developmental arena, but not truly in the mental health arena, and not in the academic/education arena. So we -- we began to see that we were going to have to do a lot of work to help develop our teams in the classroom to really embrace and begin to understand the other components within an early education model.

Amanda: And Judy, I know that you did that sort of within and without -- outside of your program. And we know, Linda, that you worked to build some very strong community partnerships over time. Can you talk a little bit about how you included them in your process?

Linda: When we started, Amanda, we developed a steering committee. And the reason for that -- one of the reasons for that is because we'd never delivered Early Head Start services before, and so we wanted to get some people who were early intervention specialists on our team to help us understand the difference in that service delivery. We serve a very rural area and two of our counties are so sparsely populated they're designated as frontier.

So you can imagine how little resources there are out there, and so everybody and everything becomes a resource. And we found it necessary that we would have to pull everybody in so that we could make the best use of services and not duplicate effort, and understand what's already out in the community, what didn't need to be developed, and engage those people as partners on our steering committee. And then we don't want to leave out the childcare community.

You know, we currently have 16 child care partners and they're a very big piece of this program for us. And we wanted to make sure that they had a voice and that they understood that they were going to be a part of this particular program. And then, not to mention, parents are primary on our steering committee. So our steering committee was assembled -- it almost mirrored, or reflected, the communities that we were serving, hoping to have every entity at the table.

Amanda: Very nice, and -- and Sarah, will you speak to including parents here, as well?

Sarah: Well, and I think that's something that I realized as a start-up planner. Depending on the agency and every organization, you know, obviously whether it's due to their mission, their purpose, the types of professionals they have employed within the organization, will bring a very different perspective to working with families.

And, oftentimes, because of our federal regulations, our Performance Standards, it's an "aha" moment, I think, during the initial start-up period where when you sit down as a planner and you have a conversation with an organization -- for example, a public school -- and you talk about the role of family, they look at you in disbelief. And being able to use that "gold standard," as Judy was saying, those Performance Standards, and say this is not a choice.

We have so many of our standards that help guide what it is that you need to do, not just in the partnership piece. It comes, as we know, through the health regulations, through our standards on the ongoing observation of children, and development of curriculum.

But I think that's something the we all probably want to be real clear on as we look at start-up as a potential challenge -- is where it is that agencies see the role of parent and helping them to recognize that what their standard is for parent involvement is oftentimes quite different as compared to what we do in Early Head Start.

Amanda: Um hm, so important and -- and Sarah can you -- also on this list we have, sort of, start-up planners. And you've certainly had experience there. We know that they're not required, but as the tip sheet says on page 15 of folks' packet, they're highly recommended and we know that a lot of programs are coming in with those. So what can they

add to this process?

Sarah: Well, you know, in my -- in my experience as a start-up planner, again, with the initial waves and then doing some start-up in the last few years, as I mentioned, the -- the capacity of the organizations that are applying for Early Head Start and communities really do make it so that there are choices. That -- I think that agencies can do a great job of evaluating their need based on the grant and who they are, what services they propose. Maybe it's management systems.

That -- it could be because I've worked with very small agencies like one in Philadelphia that received Early Head Start, and it was a very different process for them around start-up. They were more of a -- a social work background group that was a wonderful, warm, fuzzy. But they didn't necessarily have the systems piece in place because it was just a very different operation for them day to day as compared to when they then were awarded Early Head Start. As compared to another group that I worked with which was huge that was county-based in Arizona.

And so, when you look again at start-up, just -- you know, encouraging programs even though the planner is not a requirement, to very carefully evaluate what it is that they have internally as capacity. And then ask those right questions, whether using that organizational chart as a guide to say can we do this, do we have the people that can look at budget around services to pregnant women when it's not something that's -- because we're in a rural program as -- or a community like Linda's describing?

I mean, do we have to bus people places? Do we, you know, how -- how do we handle all of that? And -- and -- and then moving forward with the team. You know, making sure that the start-up team of -- of parents and community reps are -- are also part of selecting that start-up planner and making sure, again, it's a good match, because of the mission and the nature or culture of the organization as you think about selecting that start-up planner.

Because they can be a very helpful process to have a planner but I think it can also just initially be a little bit of a challenge and slow thing down if it's not the best match. But ultimately it can be a very, you know, positive and progressive step for any program as they move forward in start-up.

Amanda: Well, and we know that the Office of Head Start is doing some work around start-up planning and, sort of, preparing start-up planners. Angie, I wondered if you wanted to talk a little about that task order?

Angie: Sure, Amanda, I would be glad to. And I'd just like to build on what Sarah was talking about, that it really is the decision of a program to determine whether or not they need a -- a start-up planner -- someone from the outside, someone from the agency organization, someone from within the program. There are a lot of questions that programs will ask, and we are on a shorter timeline for start-up than we've ever been in the past.

And I think it's crucial for programs to think about, as they begin planning, how they want to do it. Some applicants, when they applied for this Early Head Start expansion, actually identified a start-up planner, and others haven't thought so much about it. Again, I think that federal staff play a crucial role in helping a program determine just if they need someone, how they would use someone in making sure that it is successful.

In the past, I think, there was some very strong experiences and strong support, and then others maybe not as well. And so what the Office of Head Start has released a task order to have start-up consultants trained. They would be identified and trained. Oftentimes identified, my hope is through programs who know that they want to work with people and -- and then those start-up trainers would be planners -- would be given training that would support the program.

And the goal is to have it be across the board a very successful experience for the program and the start-up planner. And that is out right now, and that work should start just about the same time that programs are being funded to start Early Head Start. So the goal is that we will be able to support them and that it will be successful in the way that Sarah talked about. So thank you, Amanda.

Amanda: Thank you. Well, and I -- I do want to talk a little bit about federal staff who are listed here also as resources

for programs. And as I was talking with programs about their start-up experiences, they all mentioned their program specialists as really just critical supports to them. Linda, I wondered if you could talk a little bit about your interactions with your program specialist and how -- how she's helpful to you?

Linda: I think that -- certainly I wouldn't have been able to make it through without the federal staff to guide us. I think it's important that federal staff understood that we may have been delivering Head Start services for awhile but when you reached into the Early Head Start arena it's kind of like being in a foreign land and not knowing the language. You know -- you know, you learn a few words that'll get you through and that you would be using frequently, but you really don't know all of the dialogue.

And learning that whole language and that culture of Early Head Start, that takes a lot of time, but more importantly it takes a tremendous amount of support. And I know that our program really appreciated the open communication we had with our federal staff. Even though I thought I must have been a royal pain in the neck because I might call them even more than once a day in the beginning. But they were never punitive or -- or -- you know, made me feel like I was inadequate.

They were always respectful and honest, and I think that they looked at it as what we were trying to do is just really develop good services for children in southeast Kansas. And I -- I believe that the guidance that I received from regional office and the -- the partnership or the relationship that I developed with them has really made me a better early childhood professional.

Amanda: I love the way that you said that when we were talking in preparation, it's really helped over the years to develop you into an Early Head Start professional. I think that's so lovely. And we know that there is a power in that relationship, of course. We also know that T and TA providers are -- are tremendous resources to programs. Linda, what about interactions with T and TA providers would you add here?

Linda: I think something that maybe people in Head Start lose sight of is that this Head Start system, it really provides an unprecedented amount of training and technical assistance. And a lot of other programs around the country that are doing similar work, they don't have this advantage. And we have to really understand that it is just additional support for us and how critical it can be to your success.

I think programs may need help learning how to use T and TA because they don't really understand it, but for us, we're not afraid to ask for help. And our TA folks came, helped us with strategic planning for the program, they helped us understand and really considered what we wanted the program to look like. And then we backed it up into steps that we could actually accomplish.

And, you know, what would it look like, how did -- how did we have to do this and what was the timeline going to look like? I just think without both the federal staff and T and TA, we may have struggled to be successful. Amanda: Wow. And Judy, what would you add?

Judy: I -- I would add and -- and concur with everything Linda said. I think oftentimes folks really want to be useful and I think their challenge is -- they ask us what we need and sometimes we're not sure what questions to even ask. But I think if you can bring us best practices and lessons learned from other circumstances and other organizations, that is extremely useful.

It helps us not plow ground that somebody else has already tried. And so best practices, lessons learned, sharing that from the T/TA perspective has been incredibly useful. The other thing I'd say, there's been an incredible evolve -- evolution of T/T and A, and it's, as Linda pointed out, we are -- we are very fortunate to have training and technical assistance to the level we have today in Head Start and Early Head Start.

Amanda: Very good, and as we sort of talk about all those resources for programs we can also talk about the value of the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, beginning with sort of the searchable version of the Performance Standards online, the tip sheets like those in your packet, policy clarifications, the IMs that are there.

There's just a wealth of information on there. And as we talk about resources for programs, we can also talk about resources for -- for all of you who are out there. Let's stop and ask you all, maybe, to be a resource to one another. What resources -- so I'm asking this to the general audience -- what resources would you recommend for programs during start-up? And I'm going to ask Terry to let folks know again how to call in with questions.

Terry: If you would like to ask an anonymous question, please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. We'll pause for just a moment to compile a Q and A roster. Amanda: So again, we're just asking for sort of comments or ideas about resources you'd recommend to programs during start-up.

Terry: It's me once again for comments or ideas, please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. Okay, we have no questions, comments, or ideas at this time.

Amanda: Okay. I guess I did have a question that I wanted to bring to Linda before we moved on, and that had to do with child care partners. You talked about child care partners early in -- in -- earlier in the call, and one of the things that I found as I was -- I was actually speaking with an Early Head Start liaison, who was talking about how hard waiting can be for partners and where programs might find themselves at this time.

Sort of -- as they're looking to the partners that signed the proposal and -- and they're looking around and sort of saying, "Wow," you know, "where have all of our partners gone?" And I think it has to do with sort of the change in the community. But waiting is doubly complicated, as we know, for child care who have a financial need to fill those slots.

Linda, you have done a lot of work to engage those child care partners really specifically, as early as proposal writing. Can you talk about how programs might think about keeping those partners engaged during this waiting process?

Linda: Sure, one of the things that we've done is develop a program that we call On Track. And it's just a -- a series of training and, actually, networking sessions that we do with child care partners that they can earn incentives and -- and materials for their actual centers or family care homes when they go through the training. And we also have developed a Star program where they can reach different levels of partnership.

And so we go ahead and start those folks in a -- in an On Track program because even if it would happen that we wouldn't get Early Head Start expansion or, you know, we wouldn't have funding to partner with them right now, we don't know about the future. And -- and I believe that these resources are intended to actually build the capacity of the community.

And so if we're helping build quality child care in the communities that we serve or anticipate to serve, then that just, I think, makes everything around early childhood higher quality. And so we just go ahead and engage them. We can't pay them, of course, because they're -- we don't have the funding. But we stay in touch and we're networking and we're appreciating them and we're raising their level of professionalism.

Amanda: Well, and I think that issue of, sort of, the value of having partners as a part of the start-up efforts is sort of, you know, as early as you can engage them. We know that some folks are -- some programs are sort of beginning to hear a little bit now about whether or not they've been funded but, sort of, as early as you can engage those partners in that process. And you've talked a lot about that and sort of reminds them of the value of being involved with Early Head Start programming. Very good.

Okay, the next activity, sort of, listed in that -- in the -- that page 5 is reviewing and developing management system and procedures. And there are many components listed here for programs to be looking at -- at the beginning. But let's start by looking at organizational structure.

As we talked about, sort of, the diversity of programs adding Early Head Start or expanding Early Head Start programs, we know that the existing structures are all over the map for where these -- where these Early Head Start programs are going to go. In general, what kind of insight can you all provide to adding or expanding Early Head Start as in an organization? And Sarah, for this question, I'm going to start with you.

Sarah: Okay, and, you know, I -- I guess when I think about this particular aspect of start-up, I'm being reminded of the 'fast track,' you know, the -- the energy, the -- the -- the effort that suddenly is going in a very short period of time to trying to almost create all the little pieces of what the service delivery model will entail. But getting programs to slow down and reflect and look at the systems is going to be really important.

And so, as you said, just really anticipating that we are going to have, with these new grantees, programs, or agencies that are all over the map, they're all different sizes and shapes. Some of them are stand alone, some of them are not.

That really getting, as a part of start-up, -- whether it's going to be done internally or through a consultant -- the message across that without clear, like, systems of communication, looking at those written service plans that are being developed and how they link together so that there is seamless services delivery as we look at the family, the community, the child piece, is going to be very essential. I mean, I think as a start-up planner of something as basic as transition of Early Head Start to pre-school.

And just in my own experience within a very new Early Head Start, you know, 10 years back going on-site and looking at their transition plan and discovering that they were actually transitioning their three-year-olds into a Head Start in another agency because their system of communication was so broken that they hadn't put within the enrollment criteria for the Head Start in their agency the priority to receive the Early Head Start children.

So, I mean, for something as obvious as that, we just want to make sure to slow the process down and really get people to be intentional as they move forward in the, you know, the quick time frame. We got to get this done, we got to get the facility, we have to get transportation, whatever all those other pieces, seeing how they connect into those systems is really important during that start-up.

Amanda: You know, Judy -- you know, just to ask about your experience a little bit. You had a very young Head Start program when you started your Early Head Start. So it was almost like a stand alone. How did you incorporate Head Start and Early Head Start into your existing program?

Judy: Well, I -- I think the first -- greatest advice we ever got was to create a seamless process. And it forced us to look at the organizational structure, and we chose to have our education director, our family services director, -- they're known sometimes as coordinators -- our health director to be responsible for Birth to Five.

And it allowed us then -- that we were one -- one unit stepping towards a seamless process. And so when we, as you said, we started out with Head Start and so when we got our Early Head Start we decided not to duplicate the organizational structure. We instead chose to have, as I said, the directors or coordinators be responsible for the seamless Birth to Five. Now, that required us to get caught up pretty fast on the elements that are different between Birth to Three and Three to Five, of course.

But I think -- I think the other thing is that we really chose to say, "What is our philosophy in our values about children and early education?" And that framework and that -- that work to really call out your values and your mission and philosophy really allowed us to have pretty simple decisions to make. They weren't hard ones because we knew what -- what our operational values are and -- and were going to be.

We also chose -- we were a private child care setting, as well -- we chose to use the Head Start standards for across our entire program. We, in a sense, became our own community partner. We had Early Head Start, Head Start, and then private pay, social services, child care assistance, scholarship, and we chose to have one uniform application of Head Start Performance Standards across all the program regardless of the funding sources. That made our lives easier.

We didn't have a Head Start classroom that had to do one way and a private pay that had to do a different way. So we decided to use the -- the uniformity of Head Start Performance Standards across the entire Early Education program. And while that was difficult and -- and it caused us to really have to educate people about Head Start Performance Standards, it really allowed us to have a uniformity that -- that continues to support us today.

Amanda: Well, and Linda, you have also talked about, sort of, the value of looking at that seamless system from the very beginning.

Linda: Yes, unfortunately, we were not as smart as Judy was, and so I came to the Head Start Director position and I did not write the Early Head Start grant. And about five minutes after I came into the position, we were funded. And so the program was started as a stand alone, though we had Head Start services. And there were really some disconnects -- an unbelievable amount of disconnects.

We had different staff and different forms and different management systems, and people in the community even experienced us as two different programs. And that really does not respond to the transiency of the people that we serve. And so then we had to step back and look at this and go about it totally in a different way. And that's another time when our technical assistance providers were just crucial to us making our gains to developing into a Zero to Five program which is what we are today.

All of our management team is cross-trained and they serve Zero to Five. And the assistant director and the director both serve Zero to Five. The forms are all the same across the program. It took time to understand what those barriers are that Judy's talking about.

Communication was huge, and service challenges they -- they were just different and so we had to take the two different systems and meld them into one. And I would say that was probably a transformational change that completely turned our program around to a much higher quality program. I would say any program should do that from the very start.

Amanda: Yeah, well, and we've heard that again and again. And we also heard, you know, from -- from Judy's comment, and you talked a little bit about this in your planning too, Linda, just the importance of looking at the organization's mission and how Early Head Start sort of fits into all of that.

I wanted to call everybody's attention to page 20 in their packets, and there are a few questions for folks to consider as they're -- as they're sort of building an understanding of how Early Head Start can fit into their programs and our -- our panelists helped us develop those.

Okay, we -- we know the importance of community assessment in guiding program planning. Linda, can you talk some about how the community assessment guided your planning from the very beginning?

Linda: Well, in the -- in the start, when they wrote the Early Head Start grant, of course, they did a pretty extensive community assessment and discovered that there were not a lot of very early services available in our rural areas. About the only thing that was available was Parents as Teachers.

And when our Early Head Start grant was written in the beginning, it was written with a partnership with the Parents as Teachers organization that they would deliver the child development piece of the program and then we would follow up with the social services piece. And we tried to work on that -- oh, I guess for about three years we tried to work with that model, looking at the Performance Standards and thinking that if there were current services in the area that we should try to use those, but we found out it didn't work.

The philosophies were different, the missions were different, the curriculum was different, and when we had a federal peer review, you know, we didn't score so highly with individualization. And so we had to kind of stand back and figure out that that just wasn't working.

And so we went back to try to look at the community assessment and address all of those gaps and see what we could do with other agencies in the community that we were serving, and then what we were going to have to develop ourselves in order to really fully meet the Head Start Performance Standards.

Amanda: And so for you, that community assessment change -- I guess that related, too, to the comment that Sarah made and that you made, too, that somebody different than you had written the proposal that had gone in and so there

was sort of -- between what had happened with the proposal and what happened, sort of, as you hit the ground, it was a different -- the -- those two things were sort of different.

Linda: Yes, ma'am. Amanda: Mm hm, and -- and I know that Sarah said that that was -- that's a constant issue, really, for programs, and a frequent issue for programs. Now Judy, you found that the community -- that, sort of, communities are in this constant state of flux and -- and programs, in responding to those needs, may need to make changes based on what they find in the community at implementation time. At least that's what you found in Denver.

Judy: That's correct. You know, we're -- we're urban and, of course, we found a lot of transient populations. It was fortunate at -- for us that many of the transient populations from Denver metro were moving to our service area of Aurora. But, as a result, we had developed quickly a huge waiting list, and yet with that waiting list, we found a nuance in our particular community that our parents who had young babies -- infants -- didn't want full-day child care.

And we're not saying that that's always the case, but in our case the families that had enrolled and thought they wanted full-day child care really did not want that long day for their babies. So we had to -- excuse me -- make an adjustment and -- and really have a, you know, a thorough enrollment discussion with families to be sure that we were filling their needs.

And we also found, as we enrolled parents, we'd go to the home visit, we did a pre-survey -- what is it you're -- you're seeing, what is it you're looking for from us? And it soon -- soon -- it soon played out that what we thought we were going to deliver for them and what they wanted were two different things. And so we adjusted by, for example, in one Early Head Start classroom not enrolling babies under 12 months.

So, again, responding to what families tell us, when you have three and four families living in a home there's a lot of family care that goes on, and yet we found that families wanted something for their babies around child development opportunities. Amanda: And, of course, you made all those adjustments with the partnership of your federal program officer.

Judy: Oh, we did. You know, I mean, we would say -- we would call and say, "Boy, are we finding out something and how do we -- how do we adjust for that?" And they were great. I -- I have to say, as Linda had suggested as well, our -- our federal staff were wonderful. I think we all grew up together. (Laughs)

Amanda: (Laughs) Now Judy, earlier you spoke about developing those written service plans. And we know that this is another piece of this management system step, so developing those written service plans and -- and sort of how those came together. Sarah, how did you -- we know that you -- this is -- this can be a real challenge for programs. How did you support programs in developing those plans?

Linda: Well, I would say that every aspect, in my experience, of the start-up process varies depending on the grantee. So as you mentioned a little bit before, whether it's their mission statement, whether it's their size, whether, I mean, it's just a range of -- of, you know, reasons why every activity during start-up can vary. So, for example, as I think about supporting one of my programs, they had already -- they already had Head Start. So they already had written service plans.

So for them to just add the Early Head Start piece required they basically just go back through the Standards and pull out the standards that that were, you know, relevant to Early Head Start and insert them, basically, into their existing written plans. So that it was a much different process as compared to an agency such as the one that I worked with in Arizona that was part of a very large county, who -- they were used to having what they called 'work plans'.

So it was also not such a -- such a change for them, or introducing an activity that was unusual. I think, as Judy said, it's very labor intensive and it's very worth its while. And, of course, it's required that they have these written plans. But then I compare it to the much smaller agency in Philadelphia where this -- this was just incredibly foreign. They didn't have anything like those written service plans.

So with that group, what I did is encourage them to contact the other Early Head Start programs, both within the

Philadelphia area but also in other areas of Pennsylvania, and get some ideas of how they were, you know, developing and establishing their plans.

And then, also, I found them online. It was very interesting, several years back where you can Google basically anything (Laughs) -- and I Googled Early Head Start Service Plans. And, lo and behold, there are agencies out there who actually post everything, including their service plans. So I think there, again, is a range of opportunities for us during start-up to kind of take advantage of some of the resources that are both in -- internal to organizations but also from other groups in the areas. So...

Amanda: Well, and of course federal staff and T and TA providers have access to those service plans from different folks in a variety of different ways. So... Linda: Absolutely.

Amanda: Yeah, it's interesting that that can really be such a rich resource for -- for folks. Judy, I -- I just love this comment from you -- if you could just talk about your realization that this piece of planning is really the first step of the process.

Judy: It is, and it is a process. And -- and I -- I think that, you know, just like we talked about earlier, our children's needs are changing, so we have to be fluid. While you need infrastructure -- I think it's so critical to have infrastructure and protocols -- within those you need the flexibility.

Things do change. Currently, we're working on a social/emotional pyramid and our coaching and our mentoring process that we do. And you have to allow for what you thought might work isn't workin. And you have to be willing to go back and adjust it. And I think that really using -- using resources -- the federal folks, our teaching aid person -- what -- what are they seeing and hearing from other folks who are doing something very similar to us -- again, so we don't have to replot the ground.

But I really think being flexible is critical, and yet infrastructure is the only answer. If you don't have a process laid out and an infrastructure and protocols, you end up just sort of floating around. Amanda: Well, and Angie, I wonder if you can talk for a minute just about the -- about the flexibility here for programs that are finding that things have changed in their community since they wrote their proposal?

Angie: You know, one of the things that I was thinking about as Judy was talking was the research on working with families in Early Head Start, and programs that are able to have flexible program options, change them over time as families needs change, have -- have the strongest impact with families and the greatest impact with families. So, I think it's important to be aware of things like that as we think about having to be flexible.

And what it is that families -- if you're prepared to offer center-based services but families want family child care or they want home-based services. I do think that it's important that all of us -- federal, TA, and programs -- work together to support flexibility, to honor the needs of families, and the changing needs of families. If you're in a community that -- where a lot of jobs have been lost in the last several months, you -- your program, even if you didn't apply for expansion, you may have to rethink your plans.

So I do think that that's one of the things we all need to be prepared to -- is to be flexible in supporting program options and in helping programs rethink them. Because it has budget implications, it has facilities and environment implications, it has staff training implications, so it does require a lot of thought and planning on many levels.

Amanda: Thank you. And I wonder, you know, I -- I think maybe we should open this up again for questions, if people have questions or comments. Terry, if you can come back on and remind us again about how to ask a question or make a comment?

Terry: Okay, at this time if you would like to ask a question or make a comment please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. We'll pause for just a moment to compile a Q and A roster. Once again, if you would like to make a question or comment, please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. Miss Perez, do you have any comments while we're queuing the roster?

Amanda: Well, I guess that one of the things that I would say is, in this discussion about, sort of, management systems and procedures, one of the messages that I really heard when I was talking with folks across the country, again, is, you know, many people were saying to me as we were designing our program, it was all new, we weren't really sure what questions to ask. It all seemed so -- I think Linda used the word -- foreign.

You know, this is a really different sort of thing and we weren't sure how to frame and ask a question. And I wanted to let you know that we have two tools today for you all to use in your work in supporting programs and identifying their needs and addressing them. The first one, and I know we've referenced this, is the actual Organizational Readiness Chart which is included in your packets on pages 7 through 14.

And that -- that ORC can support programs in, sort of, a step-by-step process of self-evaluation and progress chart implementation and may help them sort of frame their questions and what's happening with their planning. And the second tool on pages 18 and 19 of your packets is a list of questions developed as a part of the start-up Planning Tip Sheet Number 39.

And if programs are struggling about what questions to ask, these questions can really help them begin to identify their strengths and where they might need some help. So I think that those might offer some great resources for folks who are out there.

Terry: Okay, we do have a question from line 161. Amanda: Hi, what's your question?

Caller 1: Hi. In working with programs I'm finding that people are realizing that what they submitted in their grant, either a community partner is no longer there or as they have started to really research implementation of the model that they put into their grant, they're realizing that what they expected their community partners to do is not reasonable or... What would be the process for an Early Head Start program after they receive their award to make a fairly significant change?

Amanda: Mm hm. In -- in relationship to community partners? Caller one: Well, perhaps. Yes, perhaps they had a model where they were identifying the community partner to provide to be... Amanda: Um hm. Well...

Caller 1: ...to be part of the service provision and then either that partner's not there or how they imagined that to happen didn't look quite as realistic once they really got into it. Amanda: And we know that Linda sort of shared a little of that experience. Linda, would you have anything to add there?

Linda: I think this is a time when you're federal specialist is key, because you have to really know if what you're thinking about changing to is allowable. And so having that open dialogue will, you know, we went into this with our best ideas and -- and this is what we thought was going to happen and it hasn't. So how can we step back and turn this around so that it doesn't paralyze us and we can move forward?

Amanda: And Angie, I wondered if you'd want to add anything there?

Angie: Well, I would just 100 percent support what Linda said. I think the first step is to be very open and honest with the program specialist. Particularly if in -- I'm not sure, I think that this was part of the question -- but if you were looking to a partner to provide services, if you were going to be buying slots, or if you were going to be extending your day with a child care partner...

...and, you now know, that that's not a viable option, then that changes your -- what you submitted as a service plan. So now would be just a crucial time to talk to your federal specialist and to do a little problem solving within.

And I think that where programs sometimes get in trouble later on down the line, whether it's through refunding or through monitoring visits, can be if they've changed elements of the program or options within the program or are doing things differently than they had initially planned. And -- and so I think it's important, with the federal program specialist and with the TA, to work on exactly what it is you can do, and to start there and then move forward.

Amanda: And it sounds like there's some flexibility for -- for program specialists and for TA to respond to that.

Angie: I think, you know, I think there is. Again, it would -- that would depend on what exactly has happened and the program's ability to still provides services for the -- for the population they've identified. And so I think that that's the key, is to work with the program specialist and to inform them what's going on and to involve them in rethinking the process that the applicant, and now grantee, will have to engage in.

Amanda: I thought it was -- this is Amanda -- I thought it was a really interesting comment that was, sort of, made about the openness, and if the program can be open with -- with the program specialists and with their TA providers. Just sort of share, you know, what it is that might be challenging them - to name it first and then to share it. And I wondered if, Judy or Linda, if either of you had sort of some thoughts about how to encourage that? We talked a little bit about that earlier, Linda.

Linda: You know, I think Judy said this earlier but it's worth saying again. One of the things that's probably 100 percent going to happen is that you're going to make mistakes. And so there has to be a relationship where you allow yourself to make mistakes.

And you're allowed to be able to talk about that with your federal specialist, or even TA folks, so that there -- so that you don't feel weak or you don't feel incapable of doing this. And it -- it's new. And so I think open communication, honesty, being straightforward, not waiting until something gets to a crisis situation before you talk about it, would be the one number thing that I would say.

Amanda: Judy? Judy: And I would add that, you know, I've depended on -- on the regional office folks to -- they always bring a -- sort of -- what's new, what's happening. I remember when Seamless first started being talked about, Birth to Five. I think they brought us continuity of care ideas.

So I see the feds as always having the -- the -- the newest on the horizon. I mean, to me, the Performance Standards are so reflective of that because they're incredible. No one's been able to really match them in terms of depth and quality. So I -- I think they just serve us so well and if we'll just call and talk with them, they might have an insight about something or have something on the horizon that we need to hear about.

Amanda: Terry, do we have any more questions? Terry: Yes, your next question comes from the line number 646.  
Amanda: Hi. Caller 2: Good afternoon. Can you hear me? Amanda: Yes, speak loudly.

Caller 2: Okay. I -- I'm interested in -- in talking a little bit more, perhaps, about the -- the role of the start-up planner in working with TA providers. Any suggestions or tips so that we -- we can avoid duplication, because I can see both in their respective roles providing tremendous support to the -- to the program? At the same time, we do want to avoid duplication, and we want to make sure that they're partnering correctly.

Amanda: Sarah, do you want to address that?

Sarah: I think that's an excellent question, and I'm kind of going back to, you know, what Angie had mentioned earlier about that triangular configuration of the T and TA, the federal staff, and program, but that within that T and TA, of course, is the start-up. And so making sure that as programs are identifying what is that need...

...you know, around having, if it's an external consultant, as the T and TA, that they're simultaneously making connections with their T and TA providers and having, as you -- you know configure that start-up team, perhaps representatives -- not that they'd be, you know, on-site at all times -- but you know having the voice of the T and TA provider during, perhaps, some of the start-up meetings throughout that first year or -- or whatever would -- would make the most amount of sense.

But -- but as the caller is saying, so that you're not duplicating because there's not enough time. You know, unfortunately, because the start-up period is so short and that there's never enough money, I mean there's always plenty

of things to spend money on, we don't want, as she's describing, duplication. So I think really reminding our programs of that is that they need to define their need around start-up and then who are the players and that be a part of the plan for start-up, you know, during that year.

Amanda: Well, and it sounds like the communication piece as well. Sarah: Yeah.

Amanda: Mm hm. The third and, sort of, last element for our discussion here today is preparing for program activities. And we know that programs really struggle. One of the things we've heard over the years is identifying staff with the unique characteristics and expertise needed for services to expectant families and infants and toddlers and their families is a real challenge, and then of course hiring them and orienting them. Linda, you work in a really rural community, so where did you find your folks? Did we lose her? Linda?

Linda: Yes, hello? Amanda: Hi. Linda: Oh, okay. When you said hiring them and educating them or instructing them, my mind automatically went to 'and keeping them.' (Laughing) Amanda: (Laughing) Yes.

Linda: Because staff turnover is such a big deal. In southeast Kansas we do not have a large pool of applicants, and so we really have had to build infant/toddler expertise. And we started in the beginning with the WestEd materials and learned as much as we could from those. And then, over time, what we've tried to do is build partnerships with our area community colleges and our university. And they are helping support staff training and we've -- they've also built in some degree programs that have been real helpful to us.

And then we've relied heavily on Child Care Resource and Referral as a partner. And I think, you know, anybody else out there -- Birth to Three has been a good partner for us. Anybody else out there who's providing infant/toddler services, it's really key to learn what they know and be able to, maybe, share resources. I think one of the things that I would say as an -- an -- an administrator myself, the number one thing that I think is my job is to support staff. And if I support staff, then children are well taken care of.

But it's not just enough to support staff, then you have to figure out how to keep staff. And, you know, that's just a critical thing that we work with on a regular basis. But I believe that my -- my feelings around supporting staff and my core belief around supporting staff came from my relationship with my federal staff.

And I feel like I'm supported, and so I know how that feels and I want to pass that on to my staff. So making sure that they have what they need as far as training and materials and supplies and support is just critical to making this program work. And if you're in a rural area, you may have to create those supports just like we did.

Amanda: Well, and when you describe that, it's such a process, Linda, that you and Judy went through to sort of develop those partnerships over time. And there was a time when you just began, right? You had folks and you learned as much as you could and you trained as well as you could and you began.

Linda: And you jump. Amanda: Mm hm, you jump, that's right. We also know that facilities often need a lot of attention. Judy, can you speak to this a little bit?

Judy: Sure, I -- I think if you're supporting an organization that's going to prepare, build, or remodel a facility, it would be very useful to ask them to look at a best and worst case scenario and to really be prepared with the differences between new and remodels because there is a huge difference. Remodels often provide you a lot of new surprises and new certainly has its own issues with delivery of supplies and materials.

But I think best and worst case scenario -- our best scenario is we're going to move in March 15th, our worst case is we're not, what's our backup plan. And I -- that was -- that was really helpful to us, and I think, again, we -- we learned from other -- other grantees, as well, about their experiences. So that's an important thing to share between grantees if you can within a state, the contractors that you can count on, and the -- the, you know, the -- the subcontractors that you -- that you can use. That -- that's a -- a wealth of data very useful in this process.

Amanda: Mm hm, and Linda?

Linda: Well, our program is largely home-based, and so we are adept at providing the home-based option. And so, as Judy said, you know the 'backup plan' if the centers -- we do have some centers -- and if they weren't completed, we were able to still serve those families in home-based until we could get the center up and running. So it didn't delay start-up.

You know, the other thing I believe Sarah mentioned earlier about socialization and she talked about, "Oh, my gosh, what if you have a socialization and nobody comes?" And I think everybody has that fear. One of the things that we did to help, maybe not eliminate that but alleviate it a little bit, is we looked at what other socializations were going on in the communities.

You know, Parents as Teachers have socializations, there are some recreation departments that have socializations, there are play groups -- in early intervention programs have socialization, and so we looked at ways that we could actually partner with them. And, you know, I think by us partnering we've kind of ramped up what they were doing because we have resources to offer and we can actually provide families with a higher quality experience just by partnering.

Amanda: Mm hm. Wow, and that really speaks to, I think, sort of the creativity and the encouragement that you got thinking creatively in your work as you were doing your planning.

I wanted to call folks attention to page 24 of their handouts and -- and I had an opportunity to look on the ECLKC and just sort of see what they have available there. They have some really tremendous resources on the facilities page -- on the fiscal page.

There's some great stuff on management and administration that can answer some of the -- some of the things that we've been talking about today and, of course, there's an Early Head Start page, as well, that can sort of get folks started and really offer some tremendous resources for programs. And I just wanted to direct folks there if they haven't had a chance to look at what's available there.

Let's talk about curriculum for a second. We know that this can be a huge question. It's an important planning decision, you know, sort of what -- curriculum you're going to use, and we know that many written curricula are available now than when programs were starting say 10 or 11 years ago. Sarah, can talk about working with programs to identify an appropriate curriculum?

Sarah: Sure. It's interesting as we were preparing for this conference call that I went back into the RFP for the -- the grants, and it very specifically states in the RFP that the programs, when they put in their application, needed to have identified a curricula that "is based on scientifically valid research and that is developmentally appropriate."

So as I was looking at that, I was thinking that the majority of the responses probably identified if it was home-based it was probably going to be something like the Born to Learn from Parents as Teachers or Partners for Healthy Baby, or if it's center-based it's going to probably be a High Scope or Creative Curriculum.

But I think the reality during that start-up, because those would just be the most obvious if people, whether they wrote their own grants or got consultants to do it for them, but to -- to really come back into asking if these materials do a series of things. Number one is do they match the mission statement, the philosophy of the organization?

Because not that any of those materials are going to be that different from what an average high quality program is about, but again, just making sure that agencies are comfortable, or these new grantees, with what it is that they'd had placed in the grant and the reality of that material and using it.

I mean, obviously, looking at the program options, if they have family child care, again, there are some material that's out there -- or materials -- but the requirement of it being scientifically valid, you know, or validated, and then also really looking at their community around hiring staff.

As we were hearing, you know, both from Judy and Linda, there's going to be some concerns about that. But for those programs starting up in a rural area, so as Linda was describing, you know, where are you going to get people? That's going to also make a difference as to staff training, being able to find people who have any infant/toddler background, and then really get them ready to deliver those services. So the -- that first year just thinking about curriculum in general is one that I know causes some stress for programs.

And I found that one of the resources that you had included, another one of those Early Head Start Tip Sheets, I think it also really highlighted some wonderful questions to ask. Because I think it's one thing, again, to just say, "Okay, I -- my proposal has identified a specific curriculum," but then the -- the reality is, I just described, of deciding if it's the best material, but then the individualization process.

Because, as we know, those first federal review visits will come quickly. And getting staff, again, not that we want to be teaching to the test, but really to understand what it is to individualize for infants and toddlers -- to do the ongoing observation assessment that links with curriculum -- that generally pushes folks to a whole new level of need to know, good solid child development, but then just being able to manage a classroom.

You know, with -- with pre-school they go down for a nap so you can be working on assessment. Infants and toddlers don't necessarily all sleep at one time. So my -- my point is really getting programs to think about what is the curriculum they identified? But then the reality of getting their staff, making sure their families are comfortable with that material so they can move -- move forward with it.

Amanda: Mmm, well, I think we're at a sort of question/answer point now, and what better place to start than with curriculum, right? So if folks have questions, sort, of about anything that has been discussed here or if -- if they have comments to make we would love to hear those. Terry, once again, what are the instructions?

Terry: Okay, if you would like to ask a question, please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. You have a question from line number 244. Amanda: Hi. Hello? 244?

Caller 3: Oh hi, we actually have questions for the last session, but it's -- but we'll go ahead and ask. Amanda: Sure.

Caller 3: When you look at the range of tasks involved in start-up, what would you say would be the first set of tasks you'd want to start, like within the first 30 days? Where do you start with start-up? Amanda: Wow, that's a huge question. Does somebody want to begin with that one? Let's go to Linda. Linda, where did you start?

Linda: We pulled a team together and pulled everybody around the table, and we did this before we wrote the application, and told them that if we were funded, that they would -- we would want to bring them together to do some planning.

And in our application we had a timeline, so we just put that timeline into a logic model, and we wanted our partners to be -- to understand that we didn't feel like we were in this alone, and so we didn't do it by ourselves. So when we put our timeline into a logic model we did action steps and people responsible, and we got everybody helping us instead of trying to do it by ourselves.

Amanda: So it sounds like, really, the first step for you was pulling together that team and identifying who in the community was going to be a resource during this time, and who was going to be engaged, actively engaged in this process. So in the first 30 days that was one of the first tasks, yeah?

Linda: Yes. Amanda: And I've heard facilities, too, is a -- is a huge one to start with. Judy, did you want to add?

Judy: Yeah, I -- I think that we ask ourselves what do we want at the end of this and what is our -- what is our -- our picture or outcome we want for children and families? And we began with the end in mind, and it drove us to, of course, our values and -- and were all pretty much considered way before, especially when we submitted the application.

But I think we also developed a decision matrix, and that matrix was designed to cause us, as we would face many decisions, i.e. curriculum, you know, i.e. staffing, i.e. location, those kinds of things. What needs to be in -- in -- what needs to be considered when we make decisions? And it -- it was a four-step process and it's still -- is still very useful to us because you are -- there is constant decision making in -- in the start-up.

Amanda: Can you say a little bit more about that?

Judy: Well sure. The decision matrix -- the first question was: the decision you are about to make, does it align with your values and philosophy and mission? Second step is do you have all the data necessary to make the decision? The third step is have you utilized all the resources available to you to help you make this decision? And the fourth step is if you have not answered yes to all these questions then the decision is obvious, don't make it. (Laughs)

Amanda: (Laughs) Wow, that makes it so simple -- except for all those steps. Judy: That's right, but it really does frame you for how you make decisions and you don't get off track, especially with something that's outside of what you really believe is important. Amanda: Sarah, what would you add about the first 30 days?

Sarah: I would say, as I'm even looking at the Organizational Readiness Chart, that two things really jump out. And that's to be reminded about management and decisions around policy council. Because there are going to be certain aspects of start-up that shouldn't begin. I mean, it's wonderful, as Linda described, if you could have gotten, kind of, all of your players together as -- as you were writing the grant so you could just move forward.

But for programs that haven't done that for them to be reminded, if they're new to Head Start Early Head Start, that we have very specific standards and guidelines around who's making decisions. And so that's got to be something within the first 30 days, is that parent, you know, even if it's an interim policy council.

And then selecting managers who need to be approved then through policy council and forwarded, as I see here, to the federal staff so that there can be some decisions, again, at various levels, both the parent but overall management of the -- of the program. So then other activities that need to take place can be authorized is something that I was just -- that was popping out at me.

Amanda: I think we have time for one more question? Are there any others, Terry, or comments? Terry: Okay, we do have a question from line number 53. Amanda: Hi.

Caller 4: Hello. Can you hear me? Amanda: Yeah. Caller 4: Oh good. Amanda: Go for it.

Caller 4: I -- I have -- it's a kind of a vague question. It might be more for infant/toddler specialists call, but I, just as an Infant/Toddler Specialist state-based, I just got back from a regional conference in -- in Region VI and came back with the feeling that there was a lot of grantees still confused about who do they call for help, as far as who does the start -- not who does the start-up planning -- but whether it was an issue for start-up planner or GPSS or an infant/toddler specialist.

Because in doing our presentations, and we've been doing -- you know, going to conferences around for a while now they, you know, they came up to me and asked for help for certain things and then got back and found out, "Oh well, that's not you, that's a GPSS." And -- and I hate having to call them and say, "Oh, I can't help you. You need to call somebody else." So they just -- it just seems to be a little confusing still.

Amanda: I wonder, Angie, if that's something you can address, the different roles for folks?

Angie: Yeah, I do think it can be a little confusing. I think the first thing to remember about the start-up planner is that the start-up planner is a consultant paid for by the program. So it's really -- there's certainly a part of -- of this communication that we've been talking about. But the program director and the start-up planner work together on-site on a regular basis and the -- and the start-up planner is actually paid as a consultant by the program.

T -- TA is, as you know, it's more -- it's a free service offered to all programs and there are infant/toddler specialists

and there are GPSSs. And the role of the GPSS is to work with individual programs and the infant/toddler specialist does training within the state. And, again, that's more defined through the -- through the contracts. So there are different -- different duties, if I can call them that, or tasks that are defined for each -- each of the folks.

I think the key is open communication and ensuring that not only the -- the start-up planner is included in communication with the program director but that everyone is working together. And it can be overwhelming to a director to try and figure out, "Well, who do I call for what?" I think we've heard that from both Judy and Linda as they were beginning their work that that could be very confusing. So I think again, you can always call your program specialist if you're a program.

And I think if you're a TA person it's important to talk about those questions within your contract and with the training partners that you have so you're supporting each other. And I -- and that will help in terms of working with -- with the program. And the open communication will be key.

But know that, while the start-up planner will provide invaluable technical assistance and maybe sometimes training for a program, the relationship is very different than -- than the TA because the start-up planner actually works for the program. So maybe that helps just a little bit with those two, and then, again, I think coordination with the -- both the state and regional TAs with the regional office I think is -- is the best thing.

Amanda: Very good. We know that there might be some additional questions. I'm looking at the time. I want to let folks out there know that -- that you all can feel free to send those questions to my email address and that is [aperez@zerotothree.org](mailto:aperez@zerotothree.org) -- [aperez@zerotothree.org](mailto:aperez@zerotothree.org).

And we will -- we will, sort of, respond to those and get those responses back to all of you. So please feel free to ask those questions. We know that there may be others out there. I want to stop for final comments and make sure that our panelists have, sort of, a moment to talk about the one message that -- that they want to really leave with today. And we're going to start with Judy.

Judy: Okay. You know, I think the most important thing is the thing we all try to do every day in our programs, and that's individualize. We want to individualize with our children, with our families, with our staff. And I think, as you think about programs, individualize with them. Who are they?

I'm sure you've heard, from Linda and I, different, sort of, ideas on how we approach things, but, because we've been allowed to be who we are and -- and given the opportunity to operate on our strengths, it's been -- it's been very important in the development of our Head Start/Early Head Start program. And just one other thought, if you can help grantees develop a -- an idea that if they persevere and they're determined they get through almost anything.

Amanda: And that's such a positive message that I think people are really looking for sometimes when they're a little overwhelmed with it all, but yes, absolutely. Linda?

Linda: I think what I'd like to ask everybody to do is remember that it -- it may be important for you to contact the programs instead of waiting for them to contact you. Because -- since this is something new, we may not even know the questions to ask and we may feel like if we call you that may -- you may see us as weak or incompetent or foolish.

And so, I guess I would say that the federal specialists and TA providers really have to be a part of the process for this to be successful. And I believe that start-up is about prevention and risk management, and that it is a really great way to grow quality programs. Amanda: Thank you, Linda. And Sarah?

Sarah: I think my last as -- as I'm thinking about both what Judy and Linda had to say, is -- is encouraging programs to utilize, whether it's that Organizational Readiness Chart or some instrument by which they can identify milestones, so they can be clear on setting goals and moving ahead. Because the process is very overwhelming, and I think that having some vehicle, whether it's that particular document or something else, so they can sit down with their T and TA people.

They can -- they can contact their federal specialist and be able to ask the right questions and be clear as to where they're progressing. So that by the end of that period of start-up, everyone knows, nobody's surprised at what were the obstacles, the challenges and where the program is. Amanda: Thank you so much, Sarah. And Angie?

Angie: I just would agree with everything that's been said. I think communication is key, and everyone being open to discussions that may sometimes be hard but, if they can happen in the beginning, I think they help to build towards the program. And that -- if you can begin to work together. And it's just key the -- you know, we talked about it earlier, the relationships of everyone and the ability of everyone to work together is crucial to support programs.

And there are some great challenges right now because there are going to be hundreds of programs funded. They're going to be expected to be up and serving children in a very short time. And I think that if we understand we're all in this together and that we know that programs need support and we can support programs and support each other, then I think that families and children will receive the quality services that we know they need.

And if I could, Amanda, before giving you the last word, I'd like to thank you, I'd like to thank Judy and Linda and Sarah, and I would also like to thank everyone on the phone for spending an hour and a half with us today.

Amanda: Well, yes I -- I -- and I don't really have much to add to that, but I do hope that folks can take the time to send their evaluations in to us. That'll be at the end of your packets. We really want to hear your thoughts about this program particularly, as we move forward in planning the second audio conference in this series on December 16th. We're looking forward to getting your questions and comments as a part of that evaluation.

Thank you so much, all of you, our panelists and our audience, for being here today. And now I'll turn it over to Terry to end the call. Terry: This does conclude today's conference. You may now disconnect.

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