

Keeping Self-Assessment in Mind throughout Program Planning

Upon completion of the annual Self-Assessment, the Head Start program leaders continue along the program planning cycle. The Self-Assessment report can be used in a variety of ways throughout the year. Some of these ways are outlined below.

Conducting or Updating your Community Assessment: The Community Assessment can be an important data source for Self-Assessment. Changes in the community may result in the need for major program changes such as new sites, a change in program options, changes to ages of children served, need to hire staff who speak the primary language of a new refugee population. These changes in community needs may become a focus of Self-Assessment, benefitting especially from the input from other stakeholders in the community who are part of the Self-Assessment team. As you learn about your community, you may identify community members with specific skill sets that you will ask to join your self assessment team.

Writing or Reviewing BROAD Goals and SMART Objectives: Self-Assessment provides information on your program's progress toward its goals and objectives. This information is essential both as you write the initial goals for your five-year grant and as you revisit those goals and objectives during each year of the five-year project period. You may find that you have accomplished a short term-objective over the course of the year and now the recommendations from the Self-Assessment team lead you to set a new objective that will enable you to take the next steps toward your goal. Very

occasionally, your Self-Assessment team may recommend developing a new broad goal, accompanied by SMART objectives.

Developing an Action Plan and Budget: The progress on goals and objectives that you note during Self-Assessment guides your action planning and budgeting for the following year. Be sure to develop an action plan for any new goals or objectives you developed based on Self-Assessment recommendations.

Implementing an Action Plan: Knowing that you have based your plans on the progress noted in your Self-Assessment will keep your program moving forward to achieving your five- year broad goals.

Evaluating Progress through Ongoing Monitoring: Your ongoing monitoring system is the means by which you regularly check on how you are implementing your action plan. Data that you collect during ongoing monitoring serves as information for next year's Self-Assessment. Be sure to check on the progress towards your goals and objectives at least quarterly to make sure you are reaching your benchmarks.

Responding with Course Corrections: Making course corrections during ongoing monitoring will keep you on the track toward continuous quality improvement. Be sure to keep your action plan up to date, especially reflecting any changes in timelines.

Next Year's Self-Assessment –The planning, implementation and ongoing monitoring you have done throughout the year will inform next year's self assessment. While the exact focus may not be the same in each year of your 5

year project period, Self-Assessment will be one way you articulate progress on goals and objectives and program impact.

The graphic below illustrates how Self-Assessment can inform all parts of the program planning cycle.

