

Oversight, Monitoring, and Support for the Five-Year Grant Period
Office of Head Start 2nd National Birth to Five Leadership Institute Plenary Session

Sharon Yandian: Woo! Good afternoon. Hello, Head Start.

Audience: Hello.

Sharon: Let's get a little energy here. This is going to be an exciting session. Yes? Get all your cheers out and then get your listening ears – woo! Okay. All right.

Good afternoon. My name is Sharon Yandian, and I'm here in my role from the Office of Head Start as coordinator, director, or perhaps better said, wrangler – in a good way – of our training and technical assistance efforts; and all with the purpose, of course, in leading the early childhood field, specifically to support you in being the best you can be in providing the highest quality comprehensive services to children and families in your program. And this is the theme that we're hearing over and over again.

Before we hear from our illustrious Quality Assurance Division team, I wanted to take a few moments to talk about three things: 1) a little bit about training and technical assistance; 2) some of the tools in the Leadership Planner that you have; and 3) a little bit about who you are, the profile of you in the audience and the implications of that profile.

So first, how many of you were here yesterday when Yvette spoke? [Applause] All right. Good. Good sign. Good sign, Yvette. Yvette mentioned one part of our three-part training and technical assistance effort in terms of the funding and design, and I wanted to reiterate those three parts. In one of them, the first she talked about, was those funds that go directly to you, that through much effort have stayed intact, not subject to the Sequestration cut. The second... Yes, cheers.

The second is the state-based system managed out of our Regional Offices. Those of you who are in direct communication and who are connected to you in the terms of the strengths and the needs that you have, and that group is made up of a talented number of over 250 early childhood experts and grantee specialists.

The last of the three parts is the six National Centers; and should you forget their name, they are on your bag. Now – and who, by design, do less work directly with you as grantees but more with the state-based system who work with you, developing those consistent messages and targeted resources to support you. We rely on them to make sure what we promote has the best evidence and is cutting edge and is integrated. And I hope that you feel they have done a good job this week in terms of the sessions that you've been attending, as many of them are presenting.

While there are always growing pains when we redesign things, I also hope you feel you have an understanding of how the training and technical assistance system works and supports you, and that you are fully taking advantage of what it offers. Part of the job of the training and technical assistance system is to provide tools and practices to meet programs and individuals where they are. That's why we have put in one place in the Leadership Planner, on page 18 through 23 – please all turn there quickly – to the OHS frameworks that are tools to help you in your programmatic and management work related to school readiness. Please take the time to review and share those with your folks back home, your families – your Head Start family. And hopefully, they will also be available – not hopefully, they will be available on the ECLKC as well.

Importantly, as well, Yvette drew your attention to yesterday – page five – the Office of Head Start and the training and technical system priorities and outcomes. That document – those priorities drive all that we do. Many of you – I was in the Region IV session today, and Jeff talked quite a bit about those priorities and how they relate to the professional development plan in the region. We could do a whole session on that, page five; but again, you'll see more of this resource on the ECLKC, hopefully in an interactive manner. So again, if you would share that with those that were not able to be here and really incorporate those into your work, that would be great. Notice that I said that those were to meet programs and individuals where they are.

And I want to wrap up briefly to reflect on who you are, at least those here at the Leadership Institute. I know we have about 400 or so live streaming – at least – individuals or whoever, groups, around a computer. So the profile I'm going to reflect now really are those that registered and are here on site, but I think it's a subset of all of the Head Start staff across the country. Part of the design of the sessions that were offered related to this profile.

So in looking at it, I analyzed the data. So, I know we've been talking about a lot of data analysis. I analyzed the data on you all; and we have about 750 directors; about 1,000 managers, a little over half of those managers are Ed managers and then it's all of the other managers; 100 teachers and home visitors; 40 parents who are representing policy or parent committees. Now I think the important thing is, of the 1,700 or so directors and managers, 40 percent of you said you've been in your job less than three years. Half of that group have been in their job less than a year.

So I think – I think about the work that needs to happen as you go back. There are many others back in your agency who are also – may not be new to Head Start or they may be new to Head Start, but they certainly are in a new role. And I think that we need to be mindful of those shifting roles and think about that professional development that's needed to be in place to support staff in new roles or staff that are new to your organization. We certainly were thinking about that, and we will continue to think about that, as we look at our approach to technical assistance.

Now before I turn it over to Ross, Adia, and Larissa, I want to get you into the frame of mind to actively listen and hear about where we are, where we're going as it relates to the five-year grant period, monitoring, and related TA. You heard Elizabeth from Friends of Children and Families, Inc. in Idaho, our Family Engagement Award recipient, graciously relay her passion and gratitude to live a purpose-driven life with her work with families in Head Start, her vocation.

We know the seeds for our vocation start at a young age. And just recently, the word vocation came up in my household, and so I was explaining to my 8-year-old what vocation means. And so, it really resonated with him because since he's been 3 or 4, his vocation – he's wanted to be a construction worker. And he's added to his repertoire. He's like, well, you know, "I may be a construction worker, I also may be a football player, and I think I might also be a Lego designer." So he has lined up for himself several vocations.

But I think what we – what it reminded me of, when I was listening to Elizabeth yesterday and my son, is as we go forward, we have to stay present and focused, not only on your vocation but on the future vocations you're inspiring in the children that you work with.

So, with that, Ross? [Applause]

Ross Weaver: Good afternoon, everyone. You were louder for Sharon. [Laughter] That's all right. All right. Thank you. My name is Ross Weaver, and I'm the director of the Quality Assurance Division at the Office of Head Start, and I will be talking to you today a little bit about the five-year project period and also what we're referring to as the Ongoing Oversight System. After I have about 20-25 minutes, then Adia Brown will talk to you. Adia is the monitoring lead in the Office of Head Start. And she'll be followed by Larissa Zoot, who is our federal project officer also in the Quality Assurance Division but works with the Program Management and Fiscal Operations National Center.

It will take me... Okay, that was simple. When we look at the five-year project period, for those of you – and Sharon was just talking about how I think it was 100 or so of you are directors and Ed managers anyway, and not counting the parents, are probably in Head Start less than a year.

I just wanted to give a little bit of background where the five-year project period came from. It was actually in the 2007 Head Start Act, Section 638, which really looks at moving Head Start programs away from an indefinite project period to a five-year project period. Now that had a lot of programs, I think, nervous when that occurred. They were used to having an indefinite project period. But one of the things that – actually, there were a couple of things that it did not change.

One was the philosophy of Head Start, which Yvette referenced yesterday, where a child can benefit most from a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach, and that the child's family, parents, and community as well must be involved. You can't have just one without the other two and really have the strength that you want for your programs and the outcomes that you want for your program. You have to focus on the child within the context of the family, and the family within the context of the community.

The other thing that it retained was the Head Start goal, which was to bring about a greater degree of social competence in children of low-income families. And by social competence we mean the greater – the child's ability to deal with everyday environments as well as later responsibilities in school and life; hence the school readiness piece of preparing children for school.

Now that's probably fairly easy to understand and simple to understand where the change in direction went from indefinite project periods to five-year project periods. But I think both Roberto and Yvette yesterday talked about vision. And the five-year project period, I think, provides an opportunity for programs to continually look at what their vision is. I'm struck by a question that was asked of Helen Keller; and they asked if she ever regretted being blind. And she said, "No, but I would regret not having a vision." We need to have that vision.

Oftentimes in Head Start, we can get caught up in the day-to-day challenges – and there are many – and we don't take the time to really step back and look at the opportunity that we have in front of us. Yvette talked, again, yesterday about increasing quality, raising the bar. That's very hard to do if you're doing the same thing day after day, year after year. You really need to step back and look. Where can I be innovative? What are the challenges that are out there that we've not really addressed effectively?

Whether it's transition into public school; whether it's working with the public school system after children leave Head Start; whether it's working with other communities in your agency and saying, "You know, we in Head Start provide training for parents on Policy Council so that they understand budgets, they understand looking at data, understand grant applications. Why don't you, on your board, save an

opening so that our parents can transition from Head Start to your board, whether it's health, whether it's community action, whether it's education. It doesn't matter. You're getting the voice of Head Start parents out in the community so they continue to advocate for their child, for their family, and Head Start."

I think that... I probably ought to look and see what I said here on the five-year project plan. [Laughter] But what we will do is, which is similar to what's been done – the five-year project period will begin with the year one grant application. That application will describe how program approaches – what your approach will be, what your defined or anticipated outcomes will be, what the – measures that you'll be using within your program to know how you're making progress.

And also, it's the opportunity where you may look at doing things differently, that you may have proposed to do something in – well, for the last several years – and it may now be an opportunity to look at it and say, "You know, we have to make some tough choices. But to improve program quality, we need to make those choices. And we need to make sure that we're doing what's right for children and families."

There will be five sections in the year one application – that's the large application that you'll be submitting – and it really is based on what you find in your community assessment. There'll be a section, as there currently is, on the demonstration for the need for child development and health services, what your program service delivery options will be, and how the data supports those options. It's no longer acceptable or okay just to say, "Well, we've done this for years, so we're going to continue to do it." The data changes. We're not where we were five years ago. We're not where we were three years ago. Communities change all the time, and Head Start programs need to change with that.

There will be another section on achieving early – early learning and developmental outcomes to promote school readiness for children. As Yvette talked about yesterday, school readiness is much more than just focusing on the child, so there will also be a section in there supporting family progress and looking at the outcomes that you have for families. There will be the section that you will describe your management organizational capacity and program governance. And then the final section will be on your budget and budget justification.

Now again, those are not new, but they allow for all of us – and when I say all of us, I mean your parents, your staff, your community, the Regional Office, central office – to understand what it is that you are achieving in your program. The first year of the five-year grant will really be the foundation and implementation year. We'll be looking at specific things. When I say we, the Regional Office, Office of Head Start. We'll be looking at how your governance works in your program. There'll be a tool that we'll be looking at – asking you to look at around how you assess or screen to know what's working with your governing body, and it will be used as a tool to provide TA to your governing body and to Policy Council so that they know their responsibilities, their roles, and how to achieve the outcomes they want.

There will also be an area that will focus on health and safety of children. There will be a checklist and certification that will be required. We'll be looking at school readiness. And we'll be looking at program audits, which we did in this past year where we had a webinar where several hundred programs participated in and had their auditors on. We talked about, you know, if you're proposing changes in your program to talk to your program specialist early on so that they're on board with that.

What I meant when I said that was you need to have the data to support why you are going to a different program option from where you may be. You may want to look at and say, you know, "Our needs have changed, our communities have changed. We no longer have families in this location, but we have a great number of families in that location. We used to provide home-based here; maybe center-based is needed here. We have a high-risk population over here where maybe home-based services is the option that they need to best support those families, whether it's Early Head Start or Head Start."

So a lot of what is being looked at and what is being expected from Head Start grantees is they use the data to focus on what they see as their five-year goals and what's the progress they're making toward achieving those goals, which leads us to what happens in the years two through five. This is a change from where we've been in the past. It's probably more so clarification of what we wanted in the past and maybe just weren't clear enough on saying it. We don't want and don't need that the same application has to be sent in; the major application in year one and then all you do is resubmit the same thing in year two, three, four, and five.

What we really want you to be looking at is, what is the progress being made? How are you using the data? Whether the data is progress for children towards school, whether the data has to do with engaging parents and families, whether the data is your PIR report and whatever your percentages were, how do we improve? We were just – I was in one session where they had – meeting – regional meeting where they had a good discussion around the percent of children that receive dental screening, the percent in this particular region that needed follow-up but didn't get the treatment – the number that got the treatment and the number that didn't. And they made that a priority of where they need to put their T/TA, where they need to put their focus with – with programs, so that all children will receive the treatment that they need. It's that kind of looking at the data and making the analysis that we can support one another.

Now, as we look at year two, it really is a way that we begin to see how you're implementing what you had identified in year one and what are the outcomes. We'll be looking at both what the grantee and the Regional Office are reviewing for data and how that's being analyzed. The purpose for that is so that we can provide the needed TA, both at the National Center level and at the regional and state levels.

We've said this before, and we'll say it again. We want programs to succeed. But you need to make the choice, and many of you do every day, of how can we improve. That's what we're going to be focused on with the data, because we know that when programs use data they not only identify what's not going well or where they need to improve, they focus on and identify what is working, where your strengths are, how do you build upon what is working well within your community. And we can't under-emphasize the – the importance of looking at the strengths within programs.

Year three, we're really looking at the – again, the reporting and the grantee – reporting on grantee performance. We will be doing, in year three of a five-year application, the on-site – comprehensive on-site review. We'll be looking at the data that we've learned over the first two-and-a-half years, and we'll be seeing – to a degree, validating that information. We expect that we'll be coming out of the on-site reviews that will be improving the monitoring reports so that it really gives you not just what areas there might be that are out of compliance, but also those formats so you can see what is in compliance within your program. We'll also be focusing on comprehensive follow-up reviews.

One of the things that I think is somewhat troublesome for Office of Head Start, or at least for – I'll speak for myself on this – is the number of grantees that ended up with a deficiency because of an – because of an uncorrected noncompliance, that should be very rare because it points out that somewhere there's a gap. There's either a gap in what – how the grantee understands what the issue is, a gap in what the program – Regional Office is anticipating or working with the program on, or there's a gap in the training and technical assistance that we're giving to the program.

It's not that we should be correcting or that we can guarantee every noncompliance will be corrected, but those that aren't should never be because of a lack of trying. There really needs to be a commitment to succeed; and if a program cannot or will not, or chooses not to make the correction, that's their choice. But it shouldn't be because of a lack of resources to support them.

Okay. In year four and five, it really is looking at – year four is what we refer to as a determination year. We're going to have a complete set of data in year four so that we know which programs are eligible for renewal and which ones are – will be eligible for the DRS determination. Year five becomes the transition year. And we really want to look in this transition year – and I don't mean transition because you weren't successful. You may not be, but most of you will be; but there's still a transition year. Your grant is a five-year grant. It closes. It ends.

If you are either renewed or win through competition, you again start over a five-year project period, a new budget – I mean, a new grant number, and the process repeats itself. So the fifth year is really a transition year regardless of what's going on. And for those who are – that continue serving Head Start, again, it gives an opportunity for you to re-look at your vision, to look at what your continuous improvement means in your program and how you continue to – to strengthen.

Let's see... Okay. I used to keep water up here, and then one time I was out in the region and lo and behold, I thought I was setting it here and I had a cascade of water down here while I'm standing on electric wires here. [Laughter] So...

The first part that I talked about is really the grant application process, to work it through so you know what is expected of your grantees. I can't overemphasize the important piece that the role of the governing body, Policy Council, and management makes and takes on in terms of program governance. So when we talk about – you've done your grant application, you've submitted it, you've now gotten your year one notice of award; now we want to see what the program is doing and – and understand your ongoing oversight. And ongoing oversight occurs at both the grantee level, the regional level, and the national level. One could argue it also occurs at the state level with those programs that have child care licensing or USDA or other state partnerships that have their own requirements.

But the purpose of the ongoing oversight is really to validate program services, to look at the effectiveness of management systems and the achievement of outcomes for children, families, and communities. It's important that the ongoing oversight within your program is effective. I'm stating the obvious with that, because the more effective it is, the more accountability you're taking for your own actions and for the successes of your program. That means that the governing body, again, the Policy Council, and management, need to be involved in how that ongoing oversight system gets set up in your program and how those three entities become part of the data analysis.

I want to be clear when I say that the ongoing oversight and look – and mention the governing body and Policy Council, I am not saying that they are involved in the day-to-day operation of the program. That is

not their role. That's the role of management and staff. But their oversight, they need to understand what works, what works well and why, and where are the potential risks and how do we start to address those before they become real risks. When we talk about program and management systems, we really need to start with, internally, what your system is within your organization. Good.

I love this when I remember to push that thing and get caught up. But... Actually, I think I can push the next one because I think that's what I just talked about, so that's good. [Laughter]

The key piece, again, that I want to keep referring back to is what Yvette talked about yesterday, the continuous improvement. How do we make our program's learning environments for families, for children, for staff, for communities, so that we really know and can have an impact throughout the five-year project period? So the effective five-year oversight addresses and mitigates areas of concern throughout the year so that you can improve services to children and families when you start to see them. You can reallocate – allocate resources when it's needed so that it will provide the biggest impact, positive impact, for children and families and result in fewer findings in terms of on-site monitoring. The success really depends upon the communication between the program, the Regional Office, our T/TA partners, our grants management, fiscal staff, as well as the Office of Head Start.

Now, that may sound like – what I just described about – well, we're talking about regional and grantee and regional central office and – and those programs. But again, you apply that on the local level. All of those applied, if we're talking about evaluation instead of the triennial review, we'd be talking about your self-assessment that occurs. And that's one thing that I think over the next several months we've got to focus on and make a better commitment that self-assessments should not be done as a checklist but rather as a learning tool.

There is still, at times, I think, a – kind of the conclusion of, "Well, if we have a lot of things that we have identified on our self-assessment that need improvement and we share that with the Regional Office, or we share that with the review team that comes in, what that's going to do is set us up for identification of areas of noncompliance." That should not be – repeat – that should not ever be the purpose of a self-assessment. We do not use what you find in self-assessments to identify areas of noncompliance.

Now, there are areas of noncompliance that has to do with self-assessment. We still see programs that don't do self-assessments. Obviously, that's an issue because it's really the foundation of what you need to do, of how you step back and look at whether your self-assessment is once a year or whether your self-assessment is ongoing throughout the year, which in some cases makes sense.

If you're looking at school readiness and you're doing a lot of your data collection at three separate points, you may be looking at in the summer, what is this data telling us? That should be part of what you're looking at with your self-assessment. If your budget period is in January, you ought to be looking at the audit and those kinds of things at that appropriate time. It's not a stagnant, one point, here's what we look at. It's, how do you use data throughout your year? Again, it's for the shared accountability that we want the programs to implement a strong, ongoing oversight process.

The guiding principles – and this is what I was referring to, the on-site triennial follow-up reviews – must use multiple systems of grantee engagement; must recognize grantee strengths – don't want to rush through that – must recognize grantee strengths and quality while also mitigating potential grantee risks; must ensure shared accountability at all levels; and must insure accountability at – at and among local, state, regional, and national levels.

The ongoing analysis of data, there certainly have been a lot of sessions, both yesterday and today, that have dealt with this. We certainly won't take a lot of time now to deal with it other than to say that the Regional Office will also be implementing their own ongoing oversight process that will look at a systematic, structured staffing approach to sharing information and data analysis in order to support programs and have more regular communication with programs. As part of the ongoing oversight, we will require that – that there be in-depth discussion between regional staff and grantee staff.

Let me see. Just a minute here, folks. Okay. Can you go back? They said I can't go back on this, so can you go back – whoever's got the magic wand behind the curtain, can you go back a slide? [Laughter] There you go. Man. Great. [Laughter] Well, apparently my notes and this slide are a little bit separate here, so let me talk about...

There will be required annual visits by your program specialist, and maybe even your fiscal specialist from your Regional Office. The intent of those annual visits is to get to better understand the context within how you operate your program. It's really meant to look at, in Community A, why you do something different than in Community B or Community C. It's our opportunity, and your opportunity, to help us look at why you do what you do within your communities.

Now that's easy for me to stand up here and say, because there certainly is that, I think, apprehension of, "Well, that's very clever, but I think this is just a way to monitor us more." Well, monitoring and oversight, there is a distinction. When I talk about the oversight, it's really the support of the program. How can we achieve together what it is that we see as the vision in your community? It can never be, and will never be, effective if it's in isolation. If we don't know what you're doing or you don't know what we're expecting, it's a recipe for disaster.

Annual site visits can be done, and there are regions where – where they have been done and they've been done effectively. It's not a "got you" kind of attitude. It's let's understand one another; let's talk to one another; let's see how you are accomplishing and making the progress that you do so that we understand how that's happening and we can provide the support and technical assistance that's needed. Ah, here's the site visits. That's good. [Laughter] Okay.

Well, I guess the other thing I'll say about site visits, which is on here – that – and again, this goes back to the importance of what we said in year one in setting the foundation. We want to – when doing the annual visits, the program specialists will try to meet – and the expectation is they meet with the governing body or the Policy Council or their representatives during the annual visit. Again, this is so that we're acknowledging the role that both the governing body and the Policy Council have in the success of your program. It's not to look at one against the other. They're there together to work to support one another so that you have checks and balances within your community and within your program for success.

School readiness, we've talked, I think, a lot about that. Over the year, we will continue to have discussions with the Regional Office staff, with your programs, so that we can look at and understand how you're implementing your school readiness plans, how you collect and aggregate and analyze the school readiness data, and the progress that you're making towards school readiness goals. We'll also be engaging you in discussion around the teacher-child interaction; how you assess that interaction and how you look at staff development as a result of that.

So what I want to just end with – there's a nice little timer up here. What I want to end with is that the five-year project period provides an opportunity. You know, there's the old saying of, "A window of opportunity doesn't open itself." This is a window; a chance you have to look at how successful you are on year-by-year, and how successful you are over the course of five years.

The question really is, did we meet our vision? Did we have a meaningful impact on children, on their families, and on our community? If you can answer yes to all of that, your children will succeed, your families will succeed, and your communities will succeed in strengthening early childhood programming for all children – not just Head Start, but all children. We need to be able to rise to that challenge. And I encourage you to really look at how, internally, you're ongoing monitoring system needs to be strengthened in order for you to have better success in achieving your outcomes.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to Adia, who will talk a little bit about monitoring. [Applause]

Adia Brown: How you guys doing out there? All right. They put me on right after lunch, which is my favorite time to come and talk to all you guys. There's a lot of people out there.

Ross: I forgot to warn you. I apologize. [Laughter]

Adia: So they do Ross and then they do me, and then – you know, usually they give me about two hours to talk about monitoring, right? Today they've given me 20 minutes. So if this goes really fast, when you get home all you have to do is put your tape on slow motion and you'll get everything that I had to talk about, okay? So, monitoring; everybody who's ever seen me before, you know that this is my absolute favorite subject, and I'm always excited to come and tell you about the things that are happening with monitoring. So, if you guys are ready – are you guys ready? Because it's going to be speedy, okay? So here I go.

Let's see if this clicker works for me. It doesn't. [Laughter] All I see is the Head Start blocks up here. There it is. Thank you, whoever is doing the magic back there.

So, let me tell you a little bit about monitoring. All of this is going to be in the context, right. You came to this workshop because you wanted to hear about data-driven leadership. And monitoring, and all of what we do at the Office of Head Start, really revolves around data-driven leadership. So we tell you about data-driven leadership, but we also do it back at the Office of Head Start. So I've been around for a while, right? You look at me and I look like a kid, right? But I've been here for about 11 years. It's been a long time that I've been doing Head Start and I've been doing monitoring.

So over time, we've been actually collecting tons of data just about monitoring and how we do it for programs. So everybody who's here, you've seen all kinds of stuff. You've seen the [Inaudible], you've seen the 1099. I think when I came in it was the Prism. Then we turned to the Monitoring Protocol, OHSMS. And over time, as we learn more about programs, things tend to really evolve. And this is – and it's never going to change, right?

Change is kind of what our business is all about. As kids change, as your programs change, as parents change, as what we know about research as it relates to child development and family engagement; as all of those things change, we change to match it. And so when you guys all leave this whole idea of an indefinite project period, like when you had your grants forever, and you move into this idea of sort of the five-year grant periods, we have to evolve with that, too.

So monitoring is going to evolve over time. You'll start to see different changes. But it's not like we're just going to jump it on you, right? We're not just going to throw it in all on you and like next week all of monitoring is going to change and it's going to be totally different. It will be incremental and it has been incremental. And as I'm up here today, I'll be telling you more about how things have changed and how things are going to change in the future.

So, let's talk a little bit about how things are. Okay, a lot of people think about monitoring and think about it sort of as this one category. Oh gosh, the monitoring team is coming, right? You always hear me talk about the fact they come in the black suits, they come with the white shirts, they come with all the briefcases and the computers, and you feel like all the monitoring team is there to do is really look to see whether or not you have problems. Well over the course of time, the monitoring system has really changed and evolved so that we want to learn more about your program and we want to really understand your program from the sense of how well do you actually perform across everything.

So what most people don't know about the new monitoring system is that it actually collects data on lots of different things, not just compliance and noncompliance. We collect information about your program strengths. So we really are very interested in understanding how well – what are you doing that's really awesome? What are you doing that's innovative? What are you doing that's exciting? What are you doing that's changing the families and communities where you live? So we actually take the time to really understand what are you doing and what are your program strengths.

The next thing we look at is – we actually look at all the areas, and we capture the data of all the areas where you are actually in compliance. Now most people don't know that, because when you get your monitoring report, you get your strengths and then you get the noncompliances and the deficiencies. But we actually keep all the data about your program and how your program is actually in compliance.

And what surprises people when I come up and I tell them about this is that, for most programs, we look at about 135 what we call "compliance measures." So these are the indicators that we look at to see, okay, how well are you actually doing? So out of the 135 compliance measures, most Head Start programs get almost – a big majority of them right. If you realize that most programs have about – somewhere – the average range is somewhere between two and maybe five noncompliances.

Remember, I just told you we have 135 compliance measures. If you think that maybe two to five of them you actually become out of compliance – and sometimes when we have really serious issues people may get one or two deficiencies. Now we have some programs that get, you know, 23, but those are really unusual. So, it's really surprising to people to know that we actually collect data about where you're actually meeting all of the standards, and we keep it. And so, hopefully in the future, you'll be able to see that data.

We're working right now – remember I told you the Office – just like you're innovating and you're changing with the five years, we're innovating. So one of the things that we're trying to do right now is figure out how we can actually provide that information to grantees. We want you to be able to see all the areas that you were in compliance, as well as the ones where you weren't. So we also collect something that's called "concerns." This actually started to happen about two years ago.

We really started to look at the programs and we started to graduate what monitoring actually looked like. So instead of us just saying, oh my gosh, if you miss one child file, you're actually out of

compliance;" right? We started to think, well, if you miss one child's file, if you miss one thing, let's really look at this and let's determine whether or not we just have a concern or whether or not we have an item of noncompliance. So now we have a system that actually looks at those two things, and we understand when programs that have things that are just sort of a concern, we actually capture that. And what we do with the concerns now is we send them to your Regional Office.

So when it's a concern that's actually material, if it's something that, you know, Regional Office should really check in on or you want to get some T/TA about it, then what we do is we send those things off to the Regional Offices. They get a copy of it, and then they call you up and your program specialist will then help you with the items that were actually just concerns. They don't count against you. You get the opportunity to work on them. You get the opportunity to get better.

Then the last two things are the things that you actually know the most, noncompliances and deficiencies. Those are the ones that you actually see in your reports. That's the data that you get that actually tells you, okay, this is absolutely something that I need to correct. And then a deficiency is actually – it's a stronger – it means that something systemic and substantial happened in your program and you really need to go back and really dig deep and figure out why is that actually happening. So there's these five categories of data and data-driven information that we actually use to understand your programs. So hopefully you guys are looking at those slides and you're saying, "Oh yeah, we use lots of data just like that in our own programs to really help us move forward."

So let's talk about monitoring a little bit more and how it is today because this will help you really put things into context when you think about how things are going to change and what we're going to do tomorrow. We've learned a lot of things about the day-to-day that actually help us make a very solid system. One of the things that we've been doing across the years is we've been standardizing our methodology. This means that whenever you see a monitoring team, when they come out and they visit you, they actually all do the same exact thing.

We did that because we wanted to make sure that all – when you think about data, your data is only as good as the information coming in. So you've heard the saying before, "garbage in, garbage out," right? So what we need to do when we're doing monitoring – you may want to think about this at your own program levels when you're thinking about your own ongoing monitoring – is that we provide tools that help people collect the same type of data. And we have a standardized methodology that helps people actually do things in a very similar way. When they do that and we collect your data, we know that out of all the 1,600 programs across the country, that we're collecting very similar data, so it's much easier for us to analyze it.

So you can think about it this way. If you were doing – in your program – you know how we always say you have to assess and you have to aggregate and you analyze all your child data? If you used different tools for every one of your children, you wouldn't be able to do that; right? You wouldn't be able to look at it. You wouldn't be able to see trends. You wouldn't be able to see differences. So we apply that same kind of knowledge in monitoring. We actually say we've got to have a standardized methodology so that when we look at all the programs across the country, we can ensure that we have reliable and valid data.

We also did a lot with our – our reviewer pool. We – we did things like we hired what are called "non-federal team leaders;" and this is awesome because all these people do – all non-federal team leaders do is they just do monitoring. It's their job. So you know when you're in a program it's much easier – we

go to different programs all the time. It's much easier when you have an ECD coordinator or education coordinator and that's just her job. But a lot of times, if you have an education coordinator and her job is education coordination, health, disabilities, she also drives the bus, she teaches in the classroom two times a day; you know, that gets a little bit – it gets a little crazy, and you can't necessarily hone in all of the right expertise.

So with us having a professionalized reviewer pool, we know that each one of the reviewers and each of the team leaders that come out to your program, they're actually a professional pool. They're not doing a lot of different jobs. They're doing monitoring. And so therefore, they're really good at it. And we've heard lots of comments and feedback back that say you like that. They're much more professional. They're doing a good job out in the field. If you don't, you know, call me up later; I'll answer all your questions about them.

The other thing we did was we have a comprehensive monitoring tool. And as you think about your own systems and you think about how it is that you actually drive your data, you really have to think about whether or not you, just like we, have tools that actually help you really understand what you need to look at. So a lot of times we go into programs – and monitoring is one of our top findings, you'll see that when I get to the slide. We go into programs and they don't really have strong tools that actually help everybody understand how to assess something.

So with us in monitoring, what we do is we create a strong tool that actually helps everybody be able to sort of follow a road map to know what they're doing. So if you guys are doing that in your programs, you're doing an awesome job. But a lot of times we get to programs and they don't really have that tool, or they don't really have that mechanism, and people are confused about what they want to do. We don't do that in monitoring, so hopefully you can take that tip back to your own programs.

We also have key indicators. You know, the Performance Standards are actually 2,000-and-some-odd standards. After a while you just lose count. There's just like a lot of standards. And so we know, here at the Office of Head Start, that we could never look at all 2,000 of those standards, right? It would just be completely too many standards for us to look at. So we know that they're all important. We know that they all mean something in the program. So it's not that any of the 2,000 standards are not important, but we just have to find a way to organize them. So the way that we organize those standards is we apply them into key indicators.

When you look at the Monitoring Protocol, it's seven sections that actually pull them all together and then sort of frames them. Now, we had core leadership and we had experts that actually looked at all of the things that we want to understand about Head Start programs. And those key indicators are the things that we say, if an agency is in compliance with these things, they're most likely in compliance with other things in the program.

Now, one of the things that you'll see across the course of the five-year period is that we're really going to be refining that. We're going to be developing some new tools that actually help us look at even a smaller set of indicators. Ross talked a lot about annual visits and your program specialist coming out to take a look at you. And so, one of the things we're trying to help to really design and think about is whether or not there's a small set of indicators that we could look at that – that when we study a program or we get that data, it says, "Hey, this program is going along fine, everything – there's no problems." Or we can look at the indicators and say, "You know what? This agency looks like they need a little bit more help."

So, we're doing a lot of work with indicators. We started it a long time ago. We started it about two years ago with the Protocol, but we're doing a lot more work about indicator development and making sure we understand programs by using a smaller set of tools. And then the other thing that – that we look at at the Office of Head Start is whether or not our data is actually usable. And this is important for you as programs when you think about data-driven leadership.

If your data – if you have – we have lots of data. I mean, there's so much data you couldn't even believe it. If you ever came to the Office of Head Start, you would say, "Wow, lots of data there." We have a lot of data, right? And so one of the things that we have to understand that is a good tip for you is that we have to actually understand how to manage all that data. Every piece of data is not important, and everybody thinks that they want a different piece of data. So lots of times I go to meetings and people say, "Oh wow, it would be really cool and it would be really interesting if we had this," or "It would be really awesome if we had this piece of data." And then the next thing you know, you have 5,000 pieces of data. It's a lot of data, right?

So you never can manage – if your data source becomes too big, you can never manage all of that data. So we think about it – in the Office of Head Start, we think about how we can manage and categorize data so that it can be useful in us understanding programs and us understanding how monitoring works. You'll see a lot more of that over the course of the five years, because as we start to get more data about programs, we want to find places like ECLKC or HSES where we can share that data with you so it can be useful to your program.

So lots of people, I hope – unless you're the new directors who haven't been around for a while – you remember this wheel. We've been talking about this wheel for a very long time, and we love this wheel. We like to keep using the wheel. We like to keep bringing it back to your attention because what the wheel does is it sort of puts everything together. It is a data wheel. It's a wheel that actually puts all the pieces in one place to help you understand all the important mechanisms that you need to actually have a data-driven program and that we need to have data-driven monitoring. So in this wheel, you'll see that there's lots of different parts that actually inform our knowledge about a grantee's performance.

So for a long time – I know Ann Linehan – she's out in the audience – she said the other day, "Monitoring used to be the biggest show on the block;" right? I was always hoping that they would, like, let confetti come out, you know, when I come out on stage. They don't, but I wish they would. But monitoring was like the big thing, you know? It was like – it was the biggest part of a lot of what we did at OHS. But now, over time, other things have actually come in that have actually become a lot more important. And I'm actually glad, because monitoring – you know, a lot of people are fearful of monitoring and they really – you know, they kind of put it up as the first thing, and it really shouldn't be. Really, it's all of the pieces in the wheel that really help you to understand your program and really inform you about your program.

So, Ross was here and he talked a lot about the five – he talked about progress reports in the five years. He talked about annual visits in the five years. And if you look at the wheel, all of those things have a place. You have a place in the five years. And so, it's not just what we understand at the very third year – you know, or the triennial visit. It's not just what we understand there that helps us understand program performance; it's everything. It's a full circle of all of your data that really helps us understand what's happening with your program. Okay? So don't forget that when you're doing your own work.

But now I'm about to get to the juicy stuff. This is stuff that everybody likes. So these are the things that really help you think about – this is the data that you can look at and this is the stuff that really helps you think about, when I'm in my program and I'm thinking about monitoring, what are the – where are the places where people kind of struggle? So these slides really give you an idea. They give you an idea of what are some of the top findings in the Protocol and where do they all rest.

So I have to look down. It actually is very, very small. I'm glad I'm not at the point where I need glasses, right. But if you look, Child Health and Safety has 86 – there's 86 times where we actually found noncompliance. And this is current data. This is actually 2013. So you can see that when we go out to programs, where they struggle the most is Child Health and Safety. And you may say, "Adia, well, what does that mean?" Where is that at? Playgrounds. Playgrounds and facilities, these are things that programs can easily fix. But they – remember when I talked earlier about having a monitoring system with data that you can actually use?

What we find in programs is that, when we go out, they may have a playground safety issue or they may have a classroom safety issue, but they don't really have the mechanism – the monitoring mechanism that actually brings all the information together so they can get to those places and fix them in a timely manner. And it doesn't have anything to do about the review. It really has to do about how timely you are in fixing things in your programs. So we go out and we see it, and it pops up on our top findings list. The other place where we have a large number of findings is Systems. And that is in some ways by design.

The Monitoring Protocol now is actually designed to actually bring all of the widgets that come – we call them widgets; these are all the small standards that we understand about your program – into perspective. So we may look at a program and they may have three concerns in child health determinations, they may have two findings in the same area, they may have just some information that we noticed about what was happening in child determinations – or child health determinations. So before, what a monitoring review would do was it would individually show you all of those different items and say, okay, each one of those items represents one finding. But now, what we're able to do through the magic of data – right? – is we're able to actually put those things together and understand where the threads actually occur and understand whether or not systems problems actually happened.

Now I'm telling you guys about this because this is really important in your own programs. When you go back and you think about data-driven leadership, and you think about how does this work in my own program, a lot of times – if you're a Head Start director, you know about fires, right? Fires happening over here. Somebody didn't get Johnny's breakfast. All these different things are happening in your programs, and so it just looks like a lot of different fires. And you really never get the time to bring all those fires together and understand what they mean. When you do that, that helps you understand the systemic problems that are happening in your program.

I'll tell you a little bit more about that as we go along, but I'm going to tell you a little bit more about this data because I know people like this. So let me tell you about the top findings. All right? So one of the very – these are top findings for everything that we look at. So out of all 135 of the compliance measures that are in the Protocol, these are the ones that always – these are the top 10 that bubble up to the top. So the first one is reporting to the governing body. Hmm. Now, I wonder why that happens all the time.

The new Head Start Act actually regulated that you have to report to your governing body on a schedule. So you have monthly reports that you have to do; you have annual reports that you have to do. There's a lot of different things on that schedule, and sometimes people miss them. But the thing that people miss the most are credit card reports. For the last two years, you guys don't want to tell the governing body about your credit cards. You really want to think about going back and making sure that you have a good system that includes all of the monitoring reports that you're supposed to do, including credit cards. For some reason, this one continues to just pop up to the top of the list.

The second one, believe it or not, is staff health, the initial health exam. So lots of programs either 1) think that it's not required because maybe their bus drivers are all contracted or their teachers all work for the school district. So, a lot of times we'll see that happen. And they think, "Oh, well, I don't have to get the TB screening," or "I don't have to get the initial health exam." Or they don't keep the initial health exam. So folks really need to think about why is that bubbling up for you, or for many programs, and make sure that you put those things in. Pretty easy stuff.

The next couple of things – the next couple of things get a little tougher, and they were what I was talking about. Those are the physical environment things. There's two categories on this list that actually talk about physical environments. And programs still – it has – the top findings rarely ever change. And so, these are the things that are 1) easy to see; right? It's easy to go out and look at a playground and look at a facility and see, oh wow, yeah, they did leave a machete. No... [Laughter] They did do something that was pretty severe on the – on the playground or in the classroom. So you guys really want to think about that when you're going out, because they're easy to see but they're easy to fix if you have a system.

The other one that surprises us a lot is the one in the middle, and that's the one about Code of Conduct. This one is plaguing programs across the country. It's starting – it's coming out as ASEs; it's also coming out as deficiencies. But the Code of Conduct is, and we're seeing it a lot – we don't really understand why it's happening, but we're studying the data to learn more about it. Code of Conduct is leaving children unsupervised.

So we've seen children – the one that I saw that was very interesting, at first you kind of want to laugh but then you see how serious it is. We saw a little boy walking down the street and somebody took a picture of him on his cell phone. He was just going home from school. He just left. Or sometimes we see kids that are left on the bus. And sometimes we see kids that just get out and they – they go out and they stay on the playground. And so, these are really serious items that everybody needs to think about. And so programs are reluctant to report them, but your community is not.

So when you think about, yeah, they're not – programs are saying, hey, maybe we're not going to tell the Office of Head Start about that because, you know, we don't want to get in trouble. But we're getting letters from parents, we get it in from the news. Like I said, I got this cell phone picture that came into my office. And so, we're knowing that these kids are really being left unsupervised. But the Code of Conduct is something that you really want to take seriously. We take it seriously. It's one of the things that we have a zero tolerance policy for at the Office of Head Start. Not too many things are like that. But this one, we say if you leave a kid, it's pretty much zero tolerance. So think about that and note that it's here as one of our top findings.

The other ones as you go down the list, you know, criminal records checks continues to be at the top, screening for health services. The annual report to the public, I don't know whether or not somebody's

not writing it or not putting it together. Sometimes it's missing things. Usually it's missing the budget. [Laughter] I don't know whether that's getting hidden or not, but it's usually missing it. Determining child health status is the next one. And the last one is ongoing monitoring. So you can see in that one that we have lots of findings in that one, but it's not only the one that's in the top category here. You'll see that it's one of our top deficiencies, too. So these sort of reflect the ones that I told you that were all of the findings, but it breaks them down into those categories that I told you about. They flip-flop a little bit here.

So remember, concerns are things that we actually see in a program that don't actually raise to the level of a noncompliance. So right now, you don't see them in your reports. We send these to the Regional Office, and these are the ones that are the top concerns across the country. You can see that things flip-flopped a little bit here, and the top concern – the top concern around the country is screenings. So it's not – it used to be the top category in noncompliances, but it actually rolled up here because now we're seeing that programs are doing a lot better job with doing screenings, so your data must be working. We're going out, we're looking at people's Child Plus systems. We're looking at the COPA system; we're looking at the Prism system. We're looking at a lot of different systems, and we're seeing that that's working for people but it's still just – you know, you have one-offs with that.

I'm going to move on to the noncompliances. So you guys all have noncompliances that you're actually seeing in your program, and these are some of the top findings that we see when we go out. Again, reporting to the governing body bubbles up again. All right? And the next one that you see is deficiencies. You heard me say a lot about it when I was on the top findings slide, that Code of Conduct is actually the top – the number one deficiency across the country.

So you want to be aware of that and make sure – you know, really be careful and think about how – how kids are safe in your program. One of the things that we notice all the time when we talk about the Code of Conduct is that somebody did not follow a policy and procedure. The bus driver was supposed to check the bus; he didn't. The monitor was supposed to check the bus; she didn't. Somebody was supposed to make sure all the doors were working; they didn't. So you want to think about all the things that have caused the root problems in your organization and make sure that those things keep kids safe. Okay?

And the last thing that I want to talk about with people, because this is a conference on data-driven leadership – right? – so... [Whispering] I'm sliding. I got two things working here. Thank you, Ross. I have an iPad working, which usually changes those slides for you, and I have a button to press, too; so I'm doing them both.

So the last thing that I want to talk about with you guys is just this idea of a systems approach to monitoring. We think about it here at the Office of Head Start. So we start off with that systems approach, and we kind of put things in a framework, in a category, to really help you think about systems. But over the years, we've really been trying to simplify what systems actually means. A lot of times people try to stuff these items into one of those boxes. "Well, I've got to have a planning system." Or, "I have to have an ongoing monitoring system." Or, "I have to have a human resources system."

So, we've tried to stuff these things into these boxes to make them fit. But when you're thinking about data-driven leadership and you're thinking about your programs and how systems really works across your program, you really want to think about a clock. This is one of my favorite analogies. When I was a kid, I took apart a clock. If you ever took apart a clock before, you know that you really shouldn't do it.

That's why they have clock makers. [Laughter] If you – if you take apart a clock, it's almost impossible to put together. And sometimes when I think of Head Start I think about all the wheels and the cogs and all the different things that we have; it's like a big clock. And when you take it apart, you think, oh my gosh, what are happening with all these pieces? Well, fortunately, everybody out there is probably, in this sense, a clock maker, because you really understand all the things that make your program work.

When we think about things like human resources – that's in the middle – human resources is the system that says, "I have enough staff; everybody knows what they're supposed to do; everybody knows the plan that we have for the upcoming year; everybody knows how we're going to help families and we're going to help children make progress." That organizational structure that you have, a lot of times when I come in and I say, "Okay, tell me about your organizational structure," and people give me an organizational chart. "Look at this; we have a structure." And so, it's really more than that that you really need to understand about your program. Organizational structure, it's the heart of your program. It's the place where you really understand how everybody comes together to function. And when we come out and look at it in monitoring, those are the things that we look at.

Planning is another thing that people kind of overlook. They say, "Yeah, you know, we do self-assessment, we do the community assessment, so it's done." They put it on a shelf, and it's all good. But one of the things for planning that you need to understand is that you actually have to take that data – that's what data-driven leadership is all about. You have to take all of the data that you've learned from self-assessment, all the data that you learned from the community assessment, all the data that you learned from parent surveys, and you really need to take those and plan with that data. That's what we do at the Office of Head Start. We take all the data that we learn about your programs and we plan across the monitoring seasons.

Ongoing monitoring, I'm not even going to talk about that because you guys know how important that is. You can see that it bubbles up on our top findings lists all the time. Ongoing monitoring is really about having a strategy that helps you understand where your program is. It's about having the tools, just like we have the Monitoring Protocol. Do you have a tool that actually helps you understand how well you're doing in child health and safety? Do you have tool that helps you understand how well you're doing in child development and education? Do you have a tool that helps you understand how well you're doing in family engagement?

It's about having the right people. So ongoing monitoring is about making sure that you have the staff that can focus in on those items. Just like we have the professional reviewer pool, you have a staff that actually helps you focus in on each one of those things. It's about also making sure that you do it with frequency. So we come out and we look at you every – you know, triennially for monitoring and now a little bit more annually, but how often do you look at yourself? Because a good monitoring system actually helps you look at your program on a high enough frequency so that you know what's happening. So ongoing monitoring is really important in your agency, and you really want to make sure that you have that as a very, very strong system because without it, you don't know where you have been and you don't know where you're going.

And so the last two things on my slides are just about communication and recordkeeping and reporting. They go together. And so, you have to make sure that people in your organization are talking about the data that you're collecting. You're collecting tons of data about kids' school readiness, about your child health and safety, about everything. People should be talking about it. Do you have meetings about it? Do you have sort of – we're doing something that looks like case management. Do you do that in your

programs to make it work? So we're doing it at Office of Head Start; I hope you're doing it in your programs, too. And then recordkeeping and reporting. Everything has to be documented. If it's not, it doesn't exist.

And so with that, I'm going to turn it over to my friend, Larissa Zoot. But I hope that if this was really fast, remember, slow motion. You guys have a great day. That's my time. [Applause]

Larissa Zoot: Small but mighty. [Laughter] In the interest of reinforcing concepts of planning and coordination, we arranged this presentation in descending order of authority as well as height. [Laughter]

So, I am Larissa. And as Ross and Adia introduced me already, I'm based in the Quality Assurance Division at the Office of Head Start, and it's my privilege to be the federal project officer who is responsible for overseeing the work of the National Technical Assistance Center for Program Management and Fiscal Operations, also known as PMFO. I came to the Office of Head Start just under a year-and-a-half ago after many years in Region I in New England. And I mention that here... [Applause]

And I mention that here not to say more about myself, but because I want to call to mind your regional staff. Like the grantees, the Office of Head Start is somewhat limited in our resources, and in particular in terms of travel, and so your regional program specialists and fiscal specialists are not here with us in the audience today. Hopefully many of them are live streaming. And I just thought it would be incredibly cool if I could get an audience this big to indulge me in giving them a little shout out as a thank you for the support that they provide you so that you can support children and families. [Cheering and applause] Awesome. Thank you for that.

So because I have one foot in oversight and one in technical assistance, I consider it my role to create linkages and reinforce communication between the two. And my task today is to talk with you about directions in the TA system and to help you understand that just as we are asking grantees to adapt to new ways of doing business and to engage in data-based decision making, and to make the most of resources in working towards goals and outcomes, the TA system is working on doing the same. And some of you grantees out there might take small comfort in knowing that the TA system, in particular the National Centers, no matter how well they perform, they have five-year grants and they also will re-compete. Ooh. Wow, that died. Okay. [Laughter]

So, directions in technical assistance. At the national level, we have several areas of focus, and we want to share them with you to help ensure that we're all looking and moving in the same direction. We're invested in promoting and supporting Head Start as a learning organization. We're placing emphasis in all content areas on using data to support decision making, and utilizing a data-based approach to ensure we're making the most effective use of resources. And we're fine-tuning our commitment and practice of creating meaningful change by reinforcing learning experiences.

I'll say a bit more about what each of those means at the national level, and I'll talk a little bit about what we think they mean to you at the grantee and program level. Is your Head Start agency a learning organization? In her opening plenary yesterday, Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, the director of the Office of Head Start, talked about Head Start as a learning organization. She described learning organizations as "organizations actively and intentionally involved in creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge," and as "organizations where leaders step back and reevaluate what they do every day."

Head Start as a learning organization is not really a new concept, is it? Continuous quality improvement and ongoing professional development have always been central to our way of doing business. As Adia talked about, we have systems designed to do exactly those things. We require those systems. But much as we've made a shift over the last few years from a focus on parent involvement to a more intentional and comprehensive model of family engagement, we are now making a shift to a more clearly defined and intentional model of organizational learning. We expect you to create and sustain environments of organizational learning in your programs and agencies and to nurture innovation and growth.

In terms of the database focus on making the most of available resources, we all know grantees collect an abundance of data about all areas of the program. And frankly, we also know that grantees are in all different places along the continuum of learning to analyze all of that data in meaningful ways. The TA system is here to support you in learning how to effectively aggregate and analyze data and then apply what you learn from it in making improvements in your program.

Over time, we expect all staff to become experts in using the information you glean from data and to shape your practice in highly intentional and responsive ways. The plans you make, whether school readiness plans, program improvement plans, technical assistance plans, even your dinner plans here tonight, should all tie directly back to the data sources they're built upon. Come on. [Laughter]

Child outcomes data, ongoing monitoring data, self-assessment data, PIR data, the linkages between the data you collect and analyze and the goals and objectives you develop as a result should be abundantly clear. And creating meaningful change by reinforcing learning experiences. We know from research on training and professional development, and from many, many years of practice, that it takes repeated exposure to new concepts, reinforcement, practice, for ideas to take root and behaviors and practices to actually meaningfully change.

Throughout the levels of the technical assistance system, we are committed to moving away from one time, one shot training, which has been shown to be ineffective in actually creating change, and focusing on well-developed training plans that link one activity to another and include things like training pre-work, follow-up, and sequenced learning, moving away from solitary efforts. Today when the National Centers are approached by a Regional Office or a Head Start association with a training request, it's standard practice for us to ask, "How will you build on and reinforce the learning?" and to negotiate our services with that in mind.

We expect individual grantees to approach your technical assistance efforts in the same manner, to think about what you really want to get out of training and technical assistance in terms of changing practice and to build your plans to genuinely support those outcomes. When you think about spending any of your TA dollars to share new ideas and practices with your staff, you must have a plan for the follow-up experiences, guidance, coaching, and feedback that will reinforce those new ideas and support staff in a cycle of trying them out and increasing their proficiency until new practices firmly take hold.

So what are the next steps for the National Centers? I want to impress upon you that just as we expect grantees to use available data as a basis for plans and activities, the Office of Head Start and the technical assistance system are being held to that same expectation. The National Centers and the Regional Offices are currently in the process of developing and evaluating annual regional TA plans to help ensure a well-planned, thoughtful approach to allocating TA resources across the country in direct response to identified needs for assistance. These plans are based on information about the priorities

and needs of grantees in different regions, as well as an assessment of the training needs of regional staff.

In addition, the message from the field has gotten through loud and clear to the Office of Head Start. The materials and resources generated by the National Centers over the last couple of years are impressive – impressive and overwhelming – and you're having some trouble sorting through them, figuring out what to use when, and understanding how they align and coordinate with each other. What's meant to be helpful and supportive has in some ways, to some extent become confusing and frustrating, and we've heard you. The director of the Office of Head Start has really heard you about that. And under her direction, we are working to address this.

So that's our task now: to back off a little bit on producing new materials and to focus on helping the rest of the TA system, the Regional Office staff, and the grantees to implement the existing materials to support program improvement. [Applause] All right. With a couple of exceptions, you're going to see a slowdown in new materials. [Laughter] There's always exceptions, right? Individualization, people. With a couple of exceptions, you're going to see a slowdown in new materials and a lot of offerings to support the field in really understanding what the existing tools and resources are meant to help you accomplish and how to use them to support you in achieving your goals.

And I actually explain those exceptions a tiny bit. We do have two TA Centers – PMFO is one and the National Center for Health is another – that were funded later in the cycle than the others. They haven't had as much time to put materials out, and so they're still working on some new things; but they're doing that very much knowing that the overall picture is that folks need to understand how to use and coordinate the materials that we have. So there's also a lot of energy and effort going into increased coordination and collaboration among the National Centers. We're all partnering to ensure that we're delivering more consistent, integrated messages to the field, and we're working together to ensure that we can help you all understand how our materials fit together.

So, now that I've said that about all the Centers working together and integrating their materials, I get to highlight a few things in the works from what I really proudly think of as my Center. Actually, though, it's not as much of a contradiction as it seems like, because I'm really proud of the way that PMFO has partnered with the Office of Head Start and the other National Centers in the development of materials. We were a little bit late to the party, so we missed some of that whole forming, norming, storming stage, but by the time we showed up on the scene and were ready to develop resources, the other Centers had a lot of wisdom and experience to contribute to their development.

So, for example, there's a brand new resource on strategic use of consultants, and that resource includes case studies and examples from each of the Centers illustrating how programs have used consultants in various content areas to strengthen how they do their work. This resource just posted to the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center last week; and it's really timely when you think about the fact that, as Sharon mentioned and as Yvette mentioned yesterday, that of all the levels in the technical assistance system, it's only the grantee direct funds that are protected from reductions under Sequestration. So, we want to help you use those dollars really wisely.

PMFO also recently posted the first module on data in Head Start and Early Head Start, which is a fun, interactive learning tool that's focused on creating a culture of data – a culture of data use involving staff at all levels in your program. It takes the user through scenarios where they can make choices about interpreting data and then get feedback on their decisions. It also allows the user to think through

how most effectively to share data with different audiences that your program has to share with. The next module in this toolkit is expected to post during the summer, and it's going to go deeper into analyzing data. PMFO is also working on a suite of tools to support you in strengthening program governance. There will be training modules for the board and the Policy Council, there's going to be an in-depth assessment of board functioning, and there will be planning tools to ensure that your governing bodies, both your board and your Policy Council, are fully meeting their responsibilities.

In addition, and probably of great interest – and this is something both Ross and Adia talked about – PMFO is working on updated tools to support your annual program self-assessment. I'm really excited about those materials. And we know that over the last year or so, [Applause] that has been the number one searched item on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. We know that you're hungry for those tools.

So part of what I'm really excited about is the approach. Based on guidance from the Office of Head Start and feedback from grantees across the country, self-assessment resources are going to – they're going to emphasize working with the abundance of data you collect throughout the year. They will not create new data collection on top of everything that you already have. [Applause] The tools also encourage ongoing planning using an ongoing planning cycle to help you think ahead each year about the questions you want to be able to answer when it comes time to be able to do your next annual self-assessment. We have a tip sheet previewing some elements of that process that we're anticipating posting within the next week or two, and the new resources are anticipated to be posted by fall.

I want to talk a little bit about the grantee role in technical assistance. I mentioned a minute ago that of the three levels within the TA system, the National Centers, the state-based system, and direct funding to grantees, that grantee direct funds are the only level that won't be impacted by Sequestration. While your fiscal year 2013 operating budgets are being reduced by 5.27 percent, your technical assistance funds remain unaffected. In the face of many tough decisions to address reduction of funds for fiscal year 2013, the Office of Head Start has fought to preserve your maximum autonomy in the one area where there was flexibility about how to deal with Sequestration.

This was a decision not taken lightly by Office of Head Start, and so, too, it should not be taken lightly in the field. It's with this in mind that I just want to ask you, what are you going to do with your TA funds? How are you going to use them to meet the goals you set for your program at the start of the five-year grant cycle and to address any areas of noncompliance or potential noncompliance and build quality in its place? How will you engage the technical assistance resources to build on strengths, to address challenges, to mitigate risks, to promote school readiness, and to respond to the story that's told by your program data?

Ross talked a little bit about the annual re-funding applications within the five-year grant cycle, and how the applications in years two through five will really be structured very much like progress reports. It's your job, the grantees, to be thinking about constantly evaluating and acting on the question, how are you doing on your path to reach the objectives and outcomes you set up for yourself in year one? What do you need to provide in order to keep your program and your program staff moving forward toward those goals? Those TA dollars are there for you to provide the autonomy and flexibility in meeting your individualized program needs.

We expect you to be very thoughtful and deliberate in determining where you can get those needs met within the technical assistance system and the resources provided for you by the other levels of the

system, and where you really need to expend those dollars if there are needs that the system is not readily addressing for you. Across the five-year grant cycle, we want you to be asking yourself and addressing these questions at regular intervals. We want you to be looking back at your initial goals and assessing your progress towards them. We want you to be gathering, aggregating, and analyzing data that helps you to understand where you're making progress and where you may need to make adjustments as you move forward. We want you to be using the data to report out and share within your program, with your stakeholders, and with your assigned TA and Regional Office staff, in an ongoing conversation about your program's progress and needs. And more importantly than ever, using your data to help you make important and timely decisions.

We're almost there. As you all well know, when your funding is limited, you look at dollars and resources differently. You make stricter, more direct, more focused choices. You hone in more on whether you're targeting resources to the most important needs. When you're time is limited, at least in theory, as it is in the five-year funding cycle, will you also look at time differently? Will you feel a sense of urgency to implement effective change? Will you make more timely, more deliberate, and more focused choices, and will you more actively hone in on whether you're targeting your TA resources to the activities that will most meaningfully and expeditiously move you towards your goals? Will you eliminate activities that you've been doing, year after year to little or no effect, simply because those are the activities that you've always done? Will you try new things, new things that align with the research in the field about effective practices for professional development?

The National Centers and your state-based TA system providers are at the ready with existing and forthcoming resources highlighting and building upon what we know about those effective practices and what they are. Will you seek out ways in your community, in nearby Head Start communities, and in your state association to create some efficiencies by pooling funds when the data show that you have common training needs? And will you more often, and intentionally, seek out ways to meaningfully share data and outcomes and promote your successful practices when the data show that your program is making a difference?

As I frame these questions – this is my last try at going off the map here, guys – I'm reminded of a phrase that often comes to mind for me when I'm faced with making difficult decisions. If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always gotten. I'm pretty sure, actually, that I'm in a room full of people who would agree that what we have always gotten in Head Start has been pretty great. We support the neediest [Applause] – thank you. We support the neediest children and help put them on a level playing field. We change the lives of children and families. We build communities and we create confident early childhood professionals. That's really important work – really, really, really great stuff. But we can always, always get better, and we have to in order to continue to justify our existence as a program and prove that we're reaching the outcomes we seek in order to try to continue to grow and continue to change more lives.

The implementation of the five-year grant period heralds a new day in Head Start and Early Head Start. In your quest for quality, for ensuring school readiness, and, yes, for repeatedly securing your grant five years after five years after five years and beyond, we encourage you to become ever more the experts in using your program data for ongoing improvement and every more savvy in using your program data to demonstrate how effective you are in meeting your program goals and objectives. We also encourage you to communicate frequently and share effectively with your federal Head Start staff. That is the system that we're trying to build and improve on.

We're all in this together, and we're all seeking to ensure the strongest, most positive impacts we can – that we can have on children, families, and communities in the time that they're entrusted to our care. Thank you all so much for the incredibly important work that you do in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. [Applause]

Just a couple of quick announcements I was asked to make before I step down from here. The conference planners wanted you to know that the NHSA exhibit hall is open to participants in this conference from 7 to 9 p.m. tonight if you have your badge for the conference with you. And they also wanted me to tell you that the shuttles to the Alexandria hotels have been extended to 9 p.m. so that you can go to the exhibits. [Applause]

Ross: Well, it's after 5, and we were going to open for questions, but given – sometimes it's the wise person who realizes, don't open it for questions when it's supper time [Laughter] because the questions may be more angry about staying here.

So I want to close with something that Yvette, again, said yesterday, which I think was a good reminder for all of us. When she talked about the leadership within Head Start, that we can't work alone. We must engage parents, staff, communities, Policy Council, governing bodies, and there must be a strong commitment to family engagement. It makes a difference. And what she ended with saying is, it can't be an afterthought. If we want to succeed in the quality services to children, it means we have quality services being provided to families and we're engaging communities in what goes on within that community for all children and all families.

So I thank you for what you do every day to improve the lives of children and families, and I hope that you will take back and relay from Office of Head Start to your staff and to your parents how valuable they are in improving the lives of children and families throughout this country. There is no more important job than what you have. The impact can be immediate, and the impact will be long-term, whether we succeed or not. So our challenge, our vision, is how do we succeed in what we do so that we change and make things better for all children, families, and communities?

Thank you very much. [Applause]

[Music]