

EHS Grantee Start-Up Fact Sheet #3

Utilizing & Integrating the Start-Up Planner into the EHS Management Team

INTRODUCTION

New and expanding EHS grantees that received Federal funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 (P.L. 111-5) must quickly proceed through the early stages of the start-up process and deliver high quality services to pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and their families. To help facilitate the start-up process, EHS programs may decide to hire a Start-Up Planner for his or her knowledge, skills, and expertise. *Hiring a Start-Up Planner to work with EHS programs through the start-up process is optional, but highly recommended by the Office of Head Start.*

Often an EHS program dedicates time and planning to determine the need for a Start-Up Planner (refer to EHS Grantee Start-Up Fact Sheet 1) and assesses program needs to identify the most suitable Start-Up Planner (refer to EHS Start-Up Fact Sheet 2). After hiring a Start-Up Planner, an EHS program should consider how to effectively utilize and integrate the Start-Up Planner into the existing management team, program staff, and other key stakeholders (e.g., Policy Council, other consultants). Collaboration among the Start-Up Planner and EHS management team is vital for developing and implementing strong management systems that support quality service delivery for children and families.

This fact sheet provides EHS programs with questions to consider when identifying strategies to support the utilization and integration of the Start-Up Planner within the EHS program structure.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What strategies are useful in building and maintaining a collaborative relationship between a Start-Up Planner and the management team?

To build collaborative relationships, the Start-Up Planner should support the EHS management team to establish goals and develop plans on how to achieve them. In the Start-Up Planner's scope of work, an EHS program should clearly state the tasks, timeframe, roles, and responsibilities in accomplishing program goals. Maintaining successful working relationships through out the start-up process involves opportunities to highlight and reflect on the EHS program's successes and challenges.

2. How can an EHS program promote open communication and ensure continuity among the Start-Up Planner and other key stakeholders?

Ongoing communication among the EHS program with the Start-Up Planner and other key stakeholders, such as the Federal Program Specialist and other consultants, is essential to the program's success in completing tasks within a specified period of time. The EHS program should initiate direct contact with their Federal Program Specialist. At the request of the EHS program, the Start-Up Planner could facilitate discussions between the EHS program staff and their Federal Program Specialist and other consultants. Creating a supportive environment with open dialogue among the EHS program and other key stakeholders provides an effective way to address any changes in program needs and priorities.

3. How can an EHS program utilize a Start-Up Planner in supporting the implementation of services?

Depending on the EHS program's needs, a Start-Up Planner can be utilized in several ways. A Start-Up Planner can assess and facilitate discussion on the effectiveness of management systems in supporting quality services to pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and their families. For example, as infants and toddlers grow and develop, it is necessary to transition them into a developmentally appropriate classroom (or home) environment. By guiding a program through developing or revising transition policies, a Start-Up Planner can help staff to consider several elements:

- How can the program plan for and promote continuity of care?
- How does program staff communicate with families about the progress and abilities of their infant or toddler?
- Are the written policies and procedures reflective of what program staff do during transitions?

4. In what ways can an EHS program assess a Start-Up Planner's effectiveness in meeting program needs and achieving desired outcomes?

An EHS program can assess whether or not a Start-Up Planner is meeting the program's needs by reviewing the status of activities mentioned in the scope of work or other planning documents, such as the Organizational Readiness Chart. In partnership with the Start-Up Planner, the EHS management team should develop a collaborative process for addressing changes in roles and responsibilities based upon the program's capacity and needs. Some questions to consider when evaluating the effectiveness of the Start-Up Planner:

- Have the stated program activities been completed by the deadline?
- Is the Start-Up Planner responsive to the program's evolving needs?
- How does the Start-Up Planner and EHS program communicate changes in the scope of activities or deadlines?

5. What modifications can be made to the working relationship to enhance consultant services?

Sometimes during the start-up process, there is a need to make changes to the scope of work originally agreed upon with the Start-Up Planner. For example, initially an EHS program may have planned to provide services using the center based program option, however there have been significant delays in the completion of the facilities. In this situation, the EHS program may decide (with the approval of their Federal Program Specialist) to temporarily implement a home based program option. Therefore the scope of work must be modified and an assessment of the Start-Up Planner's knowledge, skills, and experience. If the Start-Up Planner does not have sufficient knowledge on how to implement the home based option, it is beneficial for the EHS program to consider hiring an additional Start-Up Planner or consultant with this expertise to collaborate with the existing Start-Up Planner.

CONCLUSION

The effective utilization and integration of the Start-Up Planner into the EHS program is critical for successful implementation of management systems and high quality services. All activities during start-up and implementation of services must comply with the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*. EHS programs greatly benefit from the support and guidance of a Start-Up Planner in addition to creating a lasting relationship beyond the start-up process and early implementation of services.