Purpose
Focus Area One is an opportunity for grantees to discuss their program design, management, and governance structure. In addition, this focus area is designed to develop an understanding of each grantee’s foundation for program services. Grantees will describe approaches to staffing structure, program design, education, health services, family services, fiscal infrastructure, and program governance.

Approach
The Focus Area One review is an off-site interview. The review begins with the reviewer conducting a document review using data and reports from the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) and other sources to learn about the grantee’s program design and understand the needs of the children and families the grantee serves. Prior to the call with the grantee, the reviewer will speak with the grantee’s regional program and fiscal specialists for additional context about the grantee.

Following the document review, the reviewer will conduct a series of off-site telephone interviews with the grantee that occur during a 1-week period. These discussions will provide an understanding of the program’s design and plans for implementing and ensuring comprehensive, high-quality services that meet the needs of children and families.

Methodology
Document Review. The reviewer will focus on the following listed documents located in the HSES or other available sources:
- Grant application/goals including the budget
- Program Information Report data
- Community assessment summary
- Past monitoring data
- Self-assessment data
- Annual report
- Audits

Off-site Discussions
The reviewer will work with the grantee to identify the appropriate individuals to participate in the off-site discussions (e.g., governing body, policy council, managers, and direct service staff).
Road Map to the FY 2019 Focus Area One Monitoring Protocol

This protocol will guide the discussions between the grantee and the reviewer during the Focus Area One review. It includes the topic areas for discussion, specific performance areas for assessment, and the Federal regulations associated with each area of performance. The protocol is divided into the following five topic areas:

- Program design and management
- Designing quality education and child development program services
- Designing quality health program services
- Designing quality family and community engagement program services
- Developing effective Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) strategies and fiscal infrastructure

Federal Regulations

Each section of the protocol includes a list of the Federal regulations grounding the discussions. This list ensures transparency regarding the regulations used when assessing grantee performance. Grantees should note that they remain accountable for all of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) and other Federal, State, and local regulations guiding program operations, management, and oversight.

What We Want to Learn

This section of the protocol outlines the topics for discussions between the reviewer and grantee. We designed the statements and questions listed in this section to stimulate a meaningful discussion that provides grantees an opportunity to describe the intentionality behind their program design, decisions, and operations; their challenges and strengths; and their strategies for continuous program improvement.

The questions and statements in the What We Want to Learn section are not intended to be exhaustive or to limit discussion. Using the What We Want to Learn sections as a guide, the reviewer and grantee may engage in discussion beyond the questions included in the protocol.
Program Design and Management

Overview

Purpose
Each grantee must design a program that meets community needs and ensures a program, fiscal, and human resources structure that provides effective management and oversight of all program areas. This section focuses on the intentionality of the grantee’s program design and their ability to address the characteristics, strengths, and needs of children and families they serve. The purpose of this section is to gain a foundational knowledge of the grantee’s program design and structure.

Approach
The reviewer will review documents to learn about the grantee’s operational structure, program governance, and the community’s needs. The grantee will have the opportunity to share what they have learned about the children and families in their community and how the program design is responsive to those needs and promotes school readiness. This section contains three areas for discussion: the grantee’s understanding of the needs within the community, the grantee’s approach to providing effective management and oversight; and how the policy council and governing body fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

Federal Regulations

1301.2(a)-(b) Governing body
1301.3(b)-(c) Policy council and policy committees
1301.5 Training
1302.11(b) Determining community strengths, needs, and resources
1302.20(a)-(b) Determining program structure: choosing a program option and delivering comprehensive services
1302.101(a) Management system
1302.102(a) Establishing program goals
1302.102(b) Monitoring program performance
1302.102(c) Using data for continuous improvement
1302.102(d) Reporting

What We Want to Learn

Program Design
The grantee’s program structure and design is informed by the community strengths and needs:

1. The grantee will describe how the program took into account various characteristics such as ethnicity, language, disabilities, mental health, children in foster care, homelessness, and working families when designing the program. 1302.11(b)(1)
2. The grantee will describe how the program selected program option(s) and program location to meet the needs of children and families. 1302.20(a)(1)
3. The grantee will describe how the program’s staffing ratio meets the needs of children and families.
4. The grantee will describe how changes in the community have affected the type or location of services offered.
Program Management
The grantee has an approach to providing effective management and oversight of all program areas and fiduciary responsibilities

1. The grantee will discuss how the program, in collaboration with the governing body and the policy council, develops goals for the provision of program services. 1302.102(a)
2. The grantee will describe the process for monitoring program performance and using program data to evaluate progress and risk, and to inform continuous improvement in all program service areas. 1302.102(b)
3. The grantee will discuss how the program plans to supervise staff and provide feedback to inform professional development opportunities and continuous program improvement. 1302.101(a)(2)
4. The grantee will describe the process for using child-level assessment data and other program data to direct ongoing program improvement. 1302.102(c)(2)(ii)
5. The grantee will discuss how program leadership communicates to the program staff, policy council, and governing body about program progress. 1302.102(d)
6. The grantee will discuss how the grantee ensures budget and staffing patterns support provision of a full range of services. 1302.101(a)(3)

Program Governance
The grantee maintains a formal structure for program governance that includes a governing body, a policy council (or policy committee for delegates), and parent committees.

1. The grantee will describe the composition of the governing body and policy council and the grantee’s strategy for leveraging their expertise. 1301.2(a)-(b); 1301.3(b)-(c)
2. The grantee will describe how governing body and policy councils are equipped to meet their roles and responsibilities, and to provide effective oversight. 1301.5
Designing Quality Education and Child Development Program Services

Overview

Purpose
This section focuses on the grantee’s approach to providing high-quality early education and child development services that promote the cognitive, social, and emotional growth of children, including those with disabilities, for later success in school.

Approach
The grantee will have the opportunity to describe their strategy for designing and implementing effective teaching practices and implementing safe, well-organized learning environments (and group socialization opportunities in home-based programs) that meet each child’s needs. This section contains three areas for discussion: how the grantee aligns with school readiness, the grantee’s strategies for ensuring effective teaching practices; how the grantee supports teachers in promoting school readiness; and how the home-based program option helps parents provide high-quality learning experiences.

Federal Regulations

642(f)(3) Curriculum
1302.31(a)-(e) Teaching and the learning environment
1302.34(a) Parent and family engagement in education and child development services
1302.35(a)-(c) Education in home-based programs
1302.61(a) Additional services for children with disabilities
1302.70(a) Transitions from Early Head Start
1302.91(a),(d),(e) Staff qualifications and competency requirements
1302.92(a)-(c) Training and professional development
1302.102(a)(3) School readiness goals

What We Want to Learn

Alignment with School Readiness
The grantee’s approach to school readiness aligns with the expectations of receiving schools*, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), and state early learning standards.

1. The grantee will describe how the program plans to align with the expectations of receiving schools, the HSELOF, and the state early learning standards. 1302.102(a)(3)
2. The grantee will describe how the program plans to support successful transitions for children and their families transitioning out of Early Head Start. 1302.70(a)
3. The grantee will describe why the program chose their curriculum, how it is responsive to the needs of the children, and how the curriculum will help the program meet school readiness goals. 642(f)(3)
4. The grantee will describe how the program supports parents as their children’s lifelong educators. 1302.34(a)

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*Receiving schools refers to schools and programs where enrolled children will attend upon completing the Early Head Start or Head Start program.
Effective and Intentional Approach to Teaching Practices
The grantee has strategies to ensure teaching practices promote progress toward school readiness.

1. The grantee will describe the program’s strategies for ensuring teaching practices are responsive to and build on the developmental progressions of children. 1302.31(b)(1)(ii)
2. The grantee will discuss the program’s strategies for providing nurturing and responsive environments for children, including ensuring environments are communication and language rich, promote critical thinking and problem solving, and encourage children’s engagement. 1302.31(b)(1)(i)
3. The grantee will describe the strategies to ensure the full inclusion of children with disabilities. 1302.61(a)
4. For dual language learners, the grantee will discuss their strategies to support bilingualism and biliteracy. 1302.31(b)(2)

Supporting Teachers in Promoting School Readiness
The grantee has an approach for ensuring teachers are prepared to implement the curriculum and support children’s progress toward school readiness.

1. The grantee will describe the qualifications required for managers and staff, and if staff currently meets those requirements. 1302.91(a)
2. The grantee will describe how the program assists education staff in using data to individualize learning experiences to improve outcomes for all children. 1302.92(b)(5)
3. The grantee will describe how the program identifies strengths, areas of needed support, and determines which staff would benefit from intensive coaching for all education staff. 1302.92(c)(1)

Home-Based Program Services
The grantee has strategies to ensure home-based program services help parents to provide high-quality learning experiences.

1. The grantee will discuss the strategies for promoting secure parent-child relationships and helping parents provide high-quality learning experiences. 1302.35(a)
Overview

Purpose
This section focuses on how the grantee provides high-quality health, oral health, mental health, and nutrition services that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and are supportive of each child’s growth and school readiness. This section also focuses on the grantee’s approach for maintaining a system of health and safety practices that ensures children’s safety at all times.

Approach
The reviewer will conduct an off-site interview with the management staff responsible for ensuring the delivery of high-quality health, oral health, mental health, and nutrition services. The reviewer will also ask how the grantee ensures children’s safety. This section contains two primary areas of discussion: child health and environmental safety practices.

Federal Regulations

1302.40 Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC)
1302.42(a)-(d) Child health status and care
1302.45(b)(1) Mental health consultants
1302.47(b)(1)-(4) Safety practices: system of management
Sec. 648A(g)(3) Staff recruitment and selection procedures: criminal record checks
1302.90(c) Standards of conduct

What We Want to Learn

Child Health Status and Care
The grantee has an approach to ensuring delivery of high-quality health services.

1. The grantee will describe the program’s strategy for effectively monitoring and maintaining timely information on children’s health status and care, including ongoing source of health care, preventive care, and follow-up.
   a. The grantee will discuss the approach to ensuring children have continuous ongoing healthcare. 1302.42(a)
   b. The grantee will discuss the approach to ensuring children are up to date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary medical and oral health care. 1302.42(b)(1)(i)
   c. The grantee will discuss the approach to ensuring ongoing care and extended follow-up care. 1302.42(c)-(d)
2. The grantee will describe how the program leverages expertise of the HSAC, including Head Start parents, health professionals, and community members to learn about and support each child’s health and mental health needs. 1302.40(b)
3. The grantee will describe how the program secures a mental health consultant to implement strategies to support children with mental health and social and emotional concerns. 1302.45(b)(1)
Health and Safety Practices

The grantee has strategies for maintaining healthy and safe environments and for ensuring all staff have complete background checks.

1. The grantee will describe the program’s approach to ensuring routine safety in the learning environment (indoor and outdoor facilities, equipment, and materials). 1302.47(b)(1)(ix); 1302.47(b)(2)(v)
2. The grantee will describe the program’s strategy for training staff on safety practices and procedures. 1302.47(b)(4)
3. The grantee will describe how the grantee plans to ensure that all staff abide by the program’s standard of conduct. 1302.90(c)
4. The grantee will describe the program’s process for ensuring all staff have background checks, including the timeliness of the background checks. 648A(g)(3)
**Designing Quality Family and Community Engagement Program Services**

**Overview**

**Purpose**
The grantee must integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to support family well-being and promote children’s learning and development. Programs are encouraged to develop innovative two-generation approaches that address prevalent needs of families across their program and that leverage community partnerships or other funding sources.

**Approach**
During the off-site interview, the grantee will provide information about their strategy for integrating high-quality family engagement services into all areas of programming that are responsive to the needs of families. The grantee will have the opportunity to discuss the expected outcomes for families and how the program design supports achieving those outcomes. *This section contains two areas for discussion: the grantee’s approach for collaborating with families and the grantee’s approach for providing services that strengthen parenting skills.*

**Federal Regulations**

1302.51(a)-(b) Parent activities to promote child learning and development
1302.52(c) Family partnership services
1302.53(a)(1) Community partnerships

**What We Want to Learn**

**Family Well-Being**
The grantee has an approach for collaborating with families to support family well-being.

1. The grantee will describe the approach to supporting family goal setting and tracking family strengths, needs, and progress toward goals. 1302.52(c)(3)
2. The grantee will describe the strategies for obtaining resources that support family well-being, either within the program or through community partnerships. 1302.53(a)(1)

**Strengthening Parenting and Parent-Child Supports**
The grantee has an approach to providing services that strengthen parenting skills.

1. The grantee will describe how the program plans to support parents in strengthening parenting skills and if they plan to use a parenting curriculum. 1302.51(a)-(b)
Overview

Purpose
In this section, the grantee will describe how the program’s recruitment and selection strategies are responsive to the needs of the community’s eligible children and families, and the strategy for maintaining their funded enrollment level. The grantee will also provide information about the program’s fiscal capacity and financial infrastructure.

Approach
The reviewer will discuss the grantee’s strategy for recruiting and selecting eligible children and families. The fiscal representative will discuss how the program supports the accomplishment of program goals and effectively oversees program funds and property through qualified fiscal personnel and a responsive budget.

Federal Regulations

1302.12(i) Verifying eligibility
1302.13 Recruitment of children
1302.14(a)-(b) Selection process and children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
1302.15(a) Funded enrollment
1302.91(c) Staff qualifications and competency requirements
1302.101(a)(3) Management system implementation: budget
75.308 Revision of budget and program plans
642(c)(1)(B) Governing body composition
642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VII)(aa)-(bb) Governing body responsibilities
642(c)(2)(D)(iii)-(iv) Policy council responsibilities

What We Want to Learn

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance
The grantee has strategies to identify and enroll children and families in the community most in need of services.

1. The grantee will describe how the program’s recruitment strategy reflects the grantee understands the characteristics and needs of the community’s eligible children and families. 1302.13
2. The grantee will describe the program’s strategy for recruiting children with disabilities and other vulnerable children, including homeless children and children in foster care. 1302.13
3. The grantee will describe how the program designed the selection criteria to identify and meet the needs of families most in need and describe the program’s plan for maintaining full enrollment. This includes:
   - Do the selection criteria prioritize the children and families most in need? 1302.14(a)(1)
   - Does the grantee have a verification process for determining eligibility? 1302.12(i)
   - Does the grantee have a plan for meeting and maintaining full enrollment? 1302.15(a)
   - Does the grantee have any challenges reaching full enrollment?
Fiscal Infrastructure, Capacity, and Responsiveness
The grantee’s fiscal officer and the fiscal member or the advisor to the governing body has the qualifications needed to provide oversight of the grant.

1. The grantee will describe the qualifications (experience and education) of the fiscal officer primarily responsible for the grant award(s).
   - Does the fiscal officer have the required qualifications if hired after November 2016? 1302.91(c)
2. The grantee will identify the member or advisor to the governing body with a background and expertise in fiscal management or accounting, and how the grantee uses his or her expertise. 642(c)(1)(B)

The grantee has a budget development and revision process that includes stakeholders and appropriate approvals, and ensures continuous alignment with program design, goals, and objectives.

1. The grantee will describe the budget development process, including:
   - Who is involved? 642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VII)(aa)-(bb) (governing body) and 642(c)(2)(D)(iii)-(iv) (policy council)
   - How the budget aligns with program design and goals.
   - How the grantee ensures continuous alignment between the budget and the program design, scope, and objectives by revising the budget and obtaining appropriate approvals as needed. 75.308