FY 2021 Focus Area One Monitoring Protocol

Purpose

Focus Area One (FA1) is an opportunity for grantees to discuss their program design, management, and governance structure. Grantees will describe the program's approaches to staffing structure, program design, education, health services, family services, fiscal infrastructure, and program governance.

Approach

The FA1 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

Virtual Discussions. The reviewer will work with the grantee to identify the appropriate individuals to participate in the off-site discussions (e.g., the governing body, the policy council, managers, and direct service staff).

Road Map to the FY 2021 Focus Area One Monitoring Protocol

This protocol will guide the discussions between the grantee and the reviewer during the FA1 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, management, and quality improvement
- 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

Outcomes

NEW in FY 2021: Grantees will *explain the types of data* collected to measure outcomes for each program area during the FA1 review. The Focus Area Two (FA2) review event will provide grantees with the opportunity to *share these data* and discuss how the information is used for continuous improvement. Information learned in FA1 will be used for grantees to demonstrate how the program uses data to drive child, family, and programmatic outcomes during the FA2 review.

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. In addition to learning about your strategies for the next 5 years, the Office of Head Start (OHS) also wants to learn about how the programs are responding and adjusting during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Questions and statements in the What We Want to Learn sections 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.

Understanding the Approach to Program Services

Program Design, Management, and Quality Improvement

Overview

Purpose

Each grantee must design a program that meets the community's 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 its 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 grantee will have the opportunity to share what it has learned about the needs of children and families in its community and how the program design is responsive to those needs and promotes school readiness. The governing body, the policy council, and the Management Team should be prepared to share lessons learned from the program's internal and external data and how the information ensures quality program services. 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 the governing body fulfill their roles and responsibilities.*

Program Outcomes

Grantees use data learned from the Community Assessment to inform the grant application based on the needs of the community. However, the community changes over time. The OHS is interested in understanding the type of data the grantee collects to understand these changing needs (e.g., natural shifts in the community, natural disasters, public health crises). How does the grantee use that information to adjust its services (e.g., are new services offered; new hours)? As grantees make changes to the program design, how does the program ensure the staffing structure continues to allow for effective oversight and to provide quality services that produce strong outcomes? In addition, the governing body will describe how they use data (both program data and external information) to oversee the provision of quality services for children and families and to ensure progress toward school readiness.

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) Determining program structure: choosing a program option and delivering comprehensive services

1302.101(a)-(b) 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
Performance Measure 1 (PM1): The grantee's program structure and design is informed by the community's 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 maintains full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners and their families. 1302.101(b)(2)

Management and Quality Improvement
PM2: 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, the policy council, and the governing body about program progress. 1302.102(d)
6. The grantee will discuss how the grantee ensures budget and staffing patterns support the provision of a full range of services. 1302.101(a)(3)

Program Governance
PM3: 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 the 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 the governing body and the policy council 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 its 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 four 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.*

Program Outcomes
The grantee will describe the data used to assess progress toward meeting the program's school readiness goals, and the data used to understand, track, and address children's individual needs. The grantee will also describe how the data are used to inform continuous improvement related to curriculum selection, instruction, and professional development.

Note: *Receiving schools refers to schools and programs where enrolled children will attend upon completing the Early Head Start or Head Start program.*

Federal Regulations

642(f)(3) Curriculum

1302.31(b) Teaching and the learning environment

1302.34(a) Parent and family engagement in education and child development services

1302.35(a) Education in home-based programs

1302.61(a) Additional services for children with disabilities

1302.70(a) Transitions from Early Head Start

1302.71(a) Transitions from Head Start to kindergarten

1302.91(a) Staff qualifications and competency requirements

1302.92(b)-(c) Training and professional development

1302.102(a)(3) School readiness goals

What We Want to Learn

Alignment with School Readiness

PM 1: 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 and Head Start. 1302.70(a); 1302.71(a)
3. The grantee will describe why the program chose its 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)

Effective and Intentional Approach to Teaching Practices

PM2: 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)

Supporting Teachers in Promoting School Readiness

PM3: 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 meet 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

PM4: The grantee has strategies to ensure home-based program services help parents to provide high-quality learning experiences.

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

Designing Quality Health Program Services

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 and how the grantee provides quality services for pregnant women.

Approach
The reviewer will conduct an off-site interview with the Management Team 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.

Program Outcomes
The grantee will share the type of data used to understand child health outcomes and describe how the data are used along with the expertise of the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) to inform continuous improvement.

Federal Regulations

1302.40(b) 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
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
PM1: 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 sources of health care, preventive care, and follow-up.
2. The grantee will discuss the approach to ensuring children have continuous ongoing healthcare. 1302.42(a)
3. 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)
4. The grantee will discuss the approach to ensuring ongoing care and extended follow-up care. 1302.42(c)-(d)
5. 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)
6. 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

PM2: The grantee has strategies for maintaining healthy and safe environments and for ensuring all staff have complete background checks.

7. 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)
8. The grantee will describe the program's strategy for training staff on safety practices and procedures. 1302.47(b)(4)
9. The grantee will describe how the grantee plans to ensure all staff abide by the program's Standards of Conduct. 1302.90(c)
10. 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 leverage community partnerships or other funding sources.

Approach
During the off-site interview, the grantee will provide information about its 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.*

Grantee Outcome
The grantee will describe how the program determines the resources needed to support family well-being, either within the program or through community partnerships. This includes sharing how the program measures the impact of family support services.

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
PM1: 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
PM2: The grantee has an approach to providing services that strengthen parenting skills.

3. The grantee will describe how the program plans to support parents in strengthening parenting skills and how they are using a parenting curriculum. 1302.51(a)-(b)
4. The grantee will describe how the program is implementing a parenting curriculum.

Developing Effective ERSEA Strategies and Fiscal Infrastructure

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 grantee will describe the process for maintaining enrollment and for ensuring children and families meet eligibility requirements. The grantee will describe how the program ensures its own internal monitoring against fraud, waste, and abuse. The fiscal representative will also 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.

Outcomes
The grantee will share information about ERSEA practices and how data is used to ensure the program maintains funded enrollment based on eligibility criteria. The grantee will describe what data are used and how to inform the development and refinement of the program's budget. The grantee will also share how the program uses data to determine the effectiveness of the program's fiscal infrastructure.

Federal Regulations

1302.12 Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility

1302.13 Recruitment of children

1302.14(a), (c) Selection process and children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

1302.15(a) Funded enrollment

1302.91(a), (c) Staff qualifications and competency requirements

75.308 Revision of budget and program plans

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
PM1: The grantee enrolls children or pregnant women who are categorically eligible or who meet defined income-eligibility requirements.

1. The grantee will describe **how** staff verify eligibility and how the program maintains eligibility records, including:
   o How copies of any documents or statements, including declarations, that are necessary to verify eligibility are collected and maintained. 1302.12(k)(2)(i)
   o How program staff make reasonable efforts to verify eligibility by conducting either an in-person or telephone interview with the family. 1302.12(k)(2)(ii)
   o How program staff collect statements that identify whether the family or pregnant woman meets the following eligibility requirements. 1302.12(c)(1)-(2); 1302.12(d)(1); 1302.12(e)(1)(iii):

- Income is equal to or below the poverty line
- Receiving or is eligible to receive public assistance (Supplemental Security Income and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)
- Homeless
- Foster care
- Included in the 10 percent of children enrolled in the program above the income threshold
- Included in the 35 percent of children who are not categorically eligible whose family income is between 100 percent and 130 percent of poverty

Note: *For Tribal programs, there are additional allowances provided under 1302.12(e).*

2. The grantee will describe how the program ensures staff verifies and reviews all of the documents available for determining eligibility. 1302.12(a)(ii)
3. The grantee will discuss the procedure for managing over-income applicants.
4. The grantee will describe the process for validating the accuracy of the initial determination of eligibility.
5. The grantee will describe how the program ensures staff receive ERSEA training and comply with eligibility determination regulations, including having policies and procedures in place to describe actions taken against staff who violate these regulations. 1302.12(l)-(m)

PM2: At least 10 percent of the grantee's actual enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under IDEA or the grantee has received a waiver.

1. The grantee will share the percentage of children enrolled under IDEA, or that the grantee has received a waiver. 1302.14(b)(1)

Enrollment Verification
PM3: The grantee maintains and tracks full enrollment for all enrolled participants.

1. The grantee will describe the process for determining when a slot is vacant.
2. The grantee will describe the process for removing children or pregnant women who have not attended for 30 days from the enrollment numbers reported in HSES. 1302.15(a)
3. The grantee will describe the process for filling slots that have been vacant for 30 days and will provide data on the number of vacant slots, the length of time vacant, and the description for why the slot is vacant. 1302.15(a)
4. The grantee will describe the availability and use of a waitlist that ranks children according to the selection criteria. 1302.14(c)

Fiscal Infrastructure, Capacity, and Responsiveness
PM1: The grantee's fiscal staff have the qualifications needed to provide oversight of the grant.

1. The grantee will describe the fiscal complexity of the program and applicable financial management requirements, including the existence of multiple funding sources.
2. The grantee will describe the process for staffing fiscal responsibilities and how the staffing meets the financial management needs of the organization. 1302.91(a)
3. Does the fiscal officer have the required qualifications if hired after November 2016? 1302.91(c)
4. The grantee will describe the staff responsible for developing and delivering the fiscal information that is used to inform the governing body and the policy council fiscal decision-making. 1302.102(d)(1)(ii)

PM2: 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 the program's design and goals. 1302.101(a)(3)
   - The grantee's process for tracking the budget, making revisions, and obtaining required approvals in compliance with Federal regulations. 75.308; 642(c)(1)(E)(iv)(VII)(aa)