Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Focus Area One
Monitoring Protocol

Purpose
Focus Area 1 (FA1) is an opportunity for recipients to discuss their program design, management, and governance structure. Recipients 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 recipient’s program design and understand the needs of the children and families the program serves. Prior to the call with the recipient, the reviewer will speak with the recipient’s regional program and fiscal specialists for additional context about the program.

Following the document review, the reviewer will conduct a series of off-site telephone interviews with the recipient that occur during a one-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 recipient 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 2022 Focus Area One Monitoring Protocol

This protocol will guide the discussions between the recipient 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

Recipients will explain the types of data collected to measure outcomes for each program area during the FA1 review. The Focus Area 2 (FA2) review event will provide recipients with the opportunity to share these data and discuss how the information is used for continuous improvement. During the FA2 review, recipients will demonstrate how the program uses data described in the FA1 review to drive child, family, and programmatic outcomes.

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 program performance. Recipients 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 recipient. We designed the statements and questions listed in this section to stimulate a meaningful discussion that provides recipients with an opportunity to describe the intentionality behind: their program design, decisions, and operations; their challenges and strengths; their strategies for continuous program improvement; and their strategies for creating a workplace culture that promotes diversity, belonging, and inclusion. In addition to learning about recipients’ strategies for the next five years, the Office of Head Start (OHS) also wants to learn about how programs are responding and adapting throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Overview

Purpose
Each recipient 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 recipient’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 recipient’s program design and structure.

Approach
The recipient 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, policy council, and 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 program’s understanding of the needs within the community; the program’s approach to providing effective management and oversight; and how the policy council and the governing body fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

Program Outcomes
Recipients 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. OHS is interested in understanding the type of data the recipient collects to understand these changing needs (e.g., natural shifts in the community, natural disasters, public health crises). How does the recipient use that information to adjust its services (e.g., are new services offered; new hours)? As recipients 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 committee,
1301.5 Training
1302.11(b) Determining community strengths, needs, and resources
1302.20(a) Determining program structure,
1302.101(a-b) Management system
1302.102(a-d) 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 recipient’s program structure and design is informed by the community’s strengths and needs.

1. The recipient 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 recipient will discuss their agency’s strategies for addressing inequities and promoting diversity, belonging, and inclusion among staff, families, and children.
3. The recipient will describe how the program selected program option(s) and program location to meet the needs of children and families. 1302.20(a)(1)
4. The recipient 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 recipient has an approach to providing effective management and oversight of all program areas and fiduciary responsibilities.

1. The recipient 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 recipient 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 recipient 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)
   a. The recipient will share how much of their budget is dedicated toward investing in professional development opportunities for staff.
   b. The recipient will share the number of staff that have participated in professional development opportunities related to continued education (e.g., credentialing, certificate, and degree programs).
   c. The recipient will describe what percentage of staff received a compensation increase after obtaining a new credential, certification, or degree.
   ▪ The recipient will share the average compensation increase provided for educational advancements.
4. The recipient 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 recipient 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 recipient will discuss how the program ensures staffing patterns support the provision of a full range of services. 1302.101(a)(3)
Program Governance

PM3: The recipient 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 recipient will describe the composition of the governing body and the policy council, and the recipient’s strategy for how the members of these bodies support the program. 1301.2(a-b) and 1301.3(b-c)

2. The recipient 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 program’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 recipient 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 program aligns with school readiness; the program’s strategies for ensuring effective teaching practices; how the program supports teachers in promoting school readiness; and how the home-based program option helps parents provide high-quality learning experiences.

Program Outcomes

The recipient 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 recipient 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 Head Start or Early Head Start program.

Federal Regulations

642(f)(3) Curriculum
1302.31(b) Effective teaching practices
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
PM1: The recipient’s approach to school readiness aligns with the expectations of receiving schools, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF), and state early learning standards.

1. The recipient will describe how the program plans to align with the expectations of receiving schools, the ELOF, and the state early learning standards. 1302.102(a)(3)
2. The recipient will describe how the program plans to support successful transitions for children and their families transitioning out of Early Head Start and Head Start programs1302.70(a) and 1302.71(a)
3. The recipient 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 recipient 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 recipient has strategies to ensure teaching practices promote progress toward school readiness.

1. The recipient 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 recipient 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 recipient will describe how education staff provide services for children with disabilities, including making referrals and coordinating evaluations. 1302.61(a)

Supporting Teachers in Promoting School Readiness
PM3: The recipient has an approach for ensuring teachers are prepared to implement the curriculum and support children’s progress toward school readiness.

1. The recipient will describe the qualifications required for managers and staff, and if staff currently meet those requirements. 1302.91(a)
2. The recipient 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 recipient 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 recipient has strategies to ensure home-based program services help parents to provide high-quality learning experiences.

1. The recipient 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 recipient 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 program’s approach for maintaining a system of health and safety practices and how the program provides quality services for expectant families.

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 recipient ensures children’s safety.

Program Outcomes
The recipient 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)(1-3) Mental health consultants
1302.47(b)(1-4) Safety practices
648A(g)(3) Staff recruitment and selection procedures: criminal record checks
1302.90(c) Standards of Conduct
1302.17(a)(1-4) and (b)(1-3) Suspension and expulsion

What We Want to Learn

Child Health Status and Care

PM1: The recipient has an approach to ensuring delivery of high-quality health services.

1. The recipient 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 recipient will discuss the approach to ensuring children have continuous ongoing health care. 1302.42(a)
3. The recipient 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 recipient will discuss the approach to ensuring ongoing care and extended follow-up care. 1302.42(c-d)
5. The recipient 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 recipient 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)

7. The recipient will describe how they use the mental health consultant to support children, staff, and families in meeting mental health and social and emotional needs. 1302.45(b)(3)

8. Does the program prohibit or severely limit the use of suspension due to a child’s behavior? 1302.17(a)(1-4) and (b)(1-3)

**Health and Safety Practices**

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

1. The recipient will describe their approach to mitigating the spread of COVID-19 within their program (e.g., ventilation, sharing resources on vaccinations).

2. The recipient will describe the program’s approach to ensuring safe learning environments (e.g., indoor and outdoor facilities, equipment, materials are safe and free of environmental toxins). 1302.47(b)(1)(ix) and (b)(2)(v)

3. The recipient will describe their process for lead inspections.

4. The recipient will describe the program’s strategy for training staff on safety practices and procedures. 1302.47(b)(4)

5. The recipient will describe how they plan to ensure all staff abide by the program’s Standards of Conduct. 1302.90(c)

6. The recipient 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 recipient 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 program 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 recipient 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 program’s approach for collaborating with families and for providing services that strengthen parenting skills.

Recipient Outcome

The recipient 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 recipient has an approach for collaborating with families to support family well-being.

1. The recipient will describe any lessons learned or enhancements the program has made and maintained during the pandemic to foster family engagement throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The recipient will describe the approach to supporting family goal-setting and tracking family strengths, needs, and progress toward goals. 1302.52(c)(3)
   a. The recipient will quantify the number of families that have worked with the program to develop a family partnership goal in the following categories within the last 12 months:
b. The recipient will describe the goals families are working to achieve and share how many families have completed at least one goal.

3. The recipient will describe the strategies for obtaining resources that support family well-being, either within the program or through community partnerships. 1302.53(a)(1)

4. The recipient will describe the program’s approach to addressing food insecurities, including barriers and partnerships.

5. The recipient will describe the program’s most impactful community partnership and describe how that partnership has positively influenced the community they serve.

**Strengthening Parenting and Parent-Child Supports**

**PM2:** The recipient has an approach to providing services that strengthen parenting skills.

6. The recipient will describe how the program plans to support parents in strengthening parenting skills. 1302.51(a)

7. The recipient will describe how the program is implementing a parenting curriculum. 1302.51(b)
Developing Effective ERSEA Strategies and Fiscal Infrastructure

Overview

Purpose
In this section, the recipient 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 recipient will also provide information about the program’s fiscal capacity and financial infrastructure.

Approach
The reviewer will discuss the program’s strategy for recruiting and selecting eligible children and families. The program will describe the process for maintaining enrollment and for ensuring children and families meet eligibility requirements. The recipient 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 recipient will share information about ERSEA practices and how data are used to ensure the program maintains funded enrollment based on eligibility criteria. The recipient will describe what data are used and how to inform the development and refinement of the program’s budget. The recipient 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) and (c) Selection process and children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
1302.15(a) Funded enrollment
1302.91(a) and (c) Staff qualifications and competency requirements
1302.102(d)(i) Status reporting to governing body and policy council
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 recipient enrolls children or expectant families who are categorically eligible or who meet defined income-eligibility requirements.

1. The recipient will describe how staff verify eligibility and how the program maintains eligibility records, including:
   - How copies of any documents or statements, including declarations, that are necessary to verify eligibility are collected and maintained. 1302.12(k)(2)(i)
   - 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)
   - How program staff collect statements that identify whether the family or expectant family meets the following eligibility requirements. 1302.12(c)(1-2), (d)(1), and (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)
     - Experiencing homelessness
     - In foster care
     - Included in the 10% of children enrolled in the program above the income threshold
     - Included in the 35% of children who are not categorically eligible whose family income is between 100% and 130% of poverty

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

2. The recipient will describe how the program ensures staff verifies and reviews all of the documents available for determining eligibility. 1302.12(a)(ii)

3. The recipient will discuss the procedure for managing over-income applicants.

4. The recipient will describe the process for validating the accuracy of the initial determination of eligibility.

5. The recipient 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% of the recipient’s funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or the recipient has received a waiver.

1. The recipient will share the percentage of children enrolled under IDEA, or that the recipient has received a waiver. 1302.14(b)(1)
Understanding the Approach to Program Services

Enrollment Verification

PM3: The recipient maintains and tracks full enrollment for all enrolled participants.

1. The recipient will describe the process for determining when a slot is vacant.
2. The recipient will describe the process for removing children or expectant mothers whose slot is determined vacant from the enrollment numbers reported in the HSES. 1302.15(a)
3. The recipient 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 reason why the slot is vacant. 1302.15(a)
4. The recipient will describe the availability and use of a waitlist that ranks children according to the selection criteria. 1302.14(c)
5. The program will describe their process for tracking interactions with expectant families, including the services expectant mothers and their families may receive from community partners.

Fiscal Infrastructure, Capacity, and Responsiveness

PM1: The recipient’s fiscal staff have the qualifications needed to provide oversight of the grant.

1. The recipient will describe the fiscal complexity of the program and applicable financial management requirements, including the existence of multiple funding sources.
2. The recipient 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 recipient will describe how the staff develop and deliver usable financial information to the governing body and the policy council to inform their fiscal decision-making. 1302.102(d)(1)(i)
5. The recipient will describe the program’s process for assuring that funds awarded to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19 (e.g., Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act) are used only for their appropriated purposes.

PM2: The recipient has a budget development and revision process that includes stakeholders and appropriate approvals, and ensures continuous alignment with program design, goals, and objectives.

6. The recipient 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 recipient’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)