

Preparing for and Implementing Ongoing Child Assessment

This section provides a detailed guide to planning and implementing ongoing child assessment. It is organized in a continuous cycle of four activities:

- Prepare
- Collect
- Aggregate and Analyze
- Use and Share

This is a common approach to collecting and using data. Many Head Start programs apply this approach to other types of information that they collect (e.g., enrollment and staffing data, family engagement data, languages spoken by children and their families).

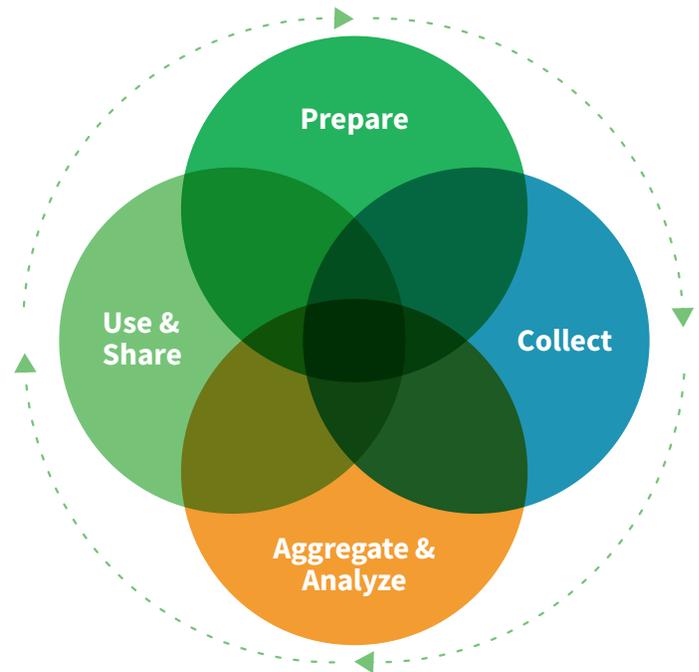
Programs must implement these four activities thoughtfully and intentionally to ensure valid and reliable ongoing assessment data. All program staff engage in this cycle to some extent, from teachers and home visitors collecting child-level data to leaders and leadership teams working with data at least three times a year.

While the four activities stay the same, the individual steps taken within each activity may look different from site to site or across program options (e.g., center-based, family childcare, home-based).

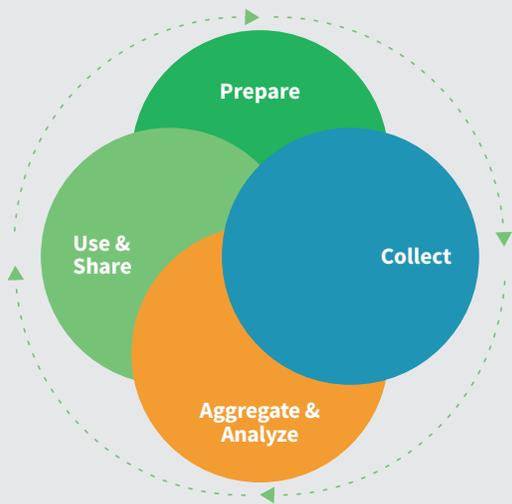
Some factors that impact the cycle include:

- Curricula and assessment tools
- Types of services and supports
- Languages and cultures of the children and families
- Staff's language strengths and cultural knowledge
- Community partnerships and resources
- Local or state collaborations with other early childhood programs and associated child assessment requirements
- Program resources

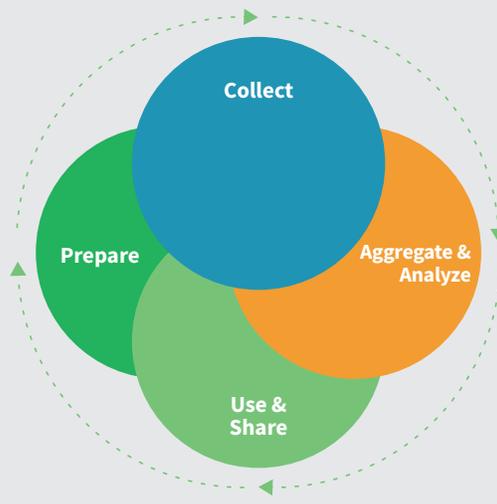
It is important to remember that the four-step process is not linear—or moving in only one direction. It is a process that sometimes moves forward and sometimes slides backward. For example, you may prepare to collect assessment data, but when you start collecting data, you realize you were not fully prepared. So, you go back and do more preparation before moving ahead. Once you find areas where your program has challenges, you can address them and move smoothly through the process.



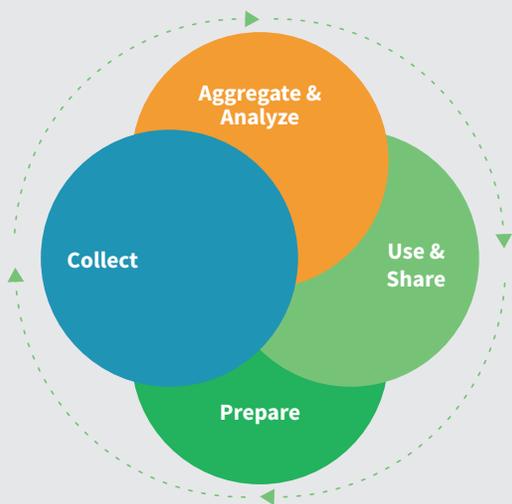
Program-Level Supports



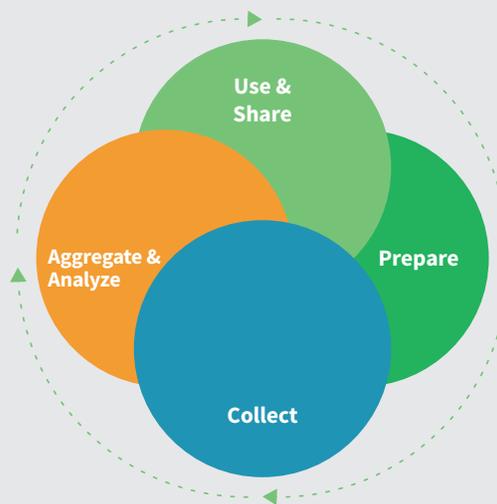
Prepare



Collect



Aggregate & Analyze



Use & Share

This section highlights program-level supports you may need, and expectations for education staff during each stage of the cycle. In [Appendix B](#), use a checklist to identify the parts of each activity where your program is doing well and where you have trouble.

As you think about the cycle, consider parallel ongoing child assessment processes at different levels in your program. As a program leader, you need to support these parallel processes. Education staff need to use the cycle to collect ongoing assessment information about each child in their classroom, their family childcare program, or their home-based caseloads. Program leadership use the cycle as they review center, program, or grantee information about children’s progress in ELOF and school readiness goals. The sections that follow discuss each of the four activities and the parallel processes within each activity.



A. Prepare

Preparing for ongoing assessment is the first and most important activity in the cycle. This is when you develop an overall assessment plan, procedures to implement the plan, and a timeline. Assessment plans address how ongoing child assessment data will be collected and used at different levels, including grantees, sites, classrooms, family childcare homes, and home-based services. Plans should also address variations in assessment practices based on children’s ages, their languages and cultures, and their abilities. In the Prepare section of the cycle, your program will develop plans to establish and support an ongoing assessment system to ensure that staff collect [valid](#) and [reliable](#) data and use that information to teach children, support parents, and inform curriculum implementation and assessment practices.

