



Planning in Head Start

Topic #4: Goals, Objectives, Outcomes, Progress, and Action Plans—Program Examples

The Head Start planning system and its related activities are an essential part of program operations.

While thoughtful planning has always been critical to successful programming, it becomes even more so as Head Start programs shift from an indefinite grant period to one based on a five-year project period. The Head Start National Centers created this series of papers to support programs in developing and implementing their planning system and in making optimal use of the five-year period. This paper provides two examples of hypothetical goals, objectives, expected outcomes, and action plans. Both examples also include data tools and methods for tracking progress.

Goals, Objectives, Outcomes, Progress, and Action Plans— What Do They Look Like?

When preparing grant applications for the new five-year project period, programs are required to submit an outcomes-focused plan that shows how the services they provide will have a cumulative impact on children, families, and the community. In subsequent years, continuation applications must show the program's progress toward its goals, objectives, and expected outcomes, so that by the fifth year, programs are able to share the difference they have made for children, families, and the community. This creates the need for two skills when planning for a five-year project period: **(1)** the ability to develop and write long-range goals and measurable objectives and **(2)** the ability to translate goals and objectives into an action plan that supports progress toward expected outcomes.

The alignment of goals with clearly defined objectives that are **SMART** (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely) will help programs ensure that they have identified the resources they need to be successful. When their objectives are **SMART**, programs can effectively spell out the exact changes they want to see and when they will occur. The expected outcomes reflect changes in knowledge, behavior, program practice, or community engagement as a result of the program's efforts.

Keep in mind that defining the monetary resources that the program needs is an important part of building an action plan. It's important to make sure that the financial supports are in place so that the program has the personnel, equipment and materials, and training and technical assistance (T/TA) needed to carry out its plan and achieve its goals and objectives. These supports may appear as fiscal objectives or actions steps needed to accomplish the goal.



This paper provides two examples of what a program’s goals, objectives, expected outcomes, and plans could look like. One example focuses on strengthening children’s transitions to kindergarten or other placements, and the other outlines an initiative that promotes language and literacy development for all children. Each of these examples illustrates:

- Broad goals based on data from community assessment, Self-Assessment, and ongoing monitoring
- Overarching goals (such as developing an attendance campaign or a healthy living initiative) that, to be achieved, require contributions from all parts of the program
- Objectives that are **SMART**: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely
- Expected outcomes that show what success looks like if the goal is achieved
- Data tools or methods for tracking progress
- Sequential actions/strategies that outline how the work is to be carried out over the course of the program year

Example 1

SCENARIO

Community Assessment Report: Always Cutting Edge (ACE) Early Head Start/Head Start (Head Start and Early Head Start) program’s update of its community assessment revealed some interesting information. Two new elementary schools had opened in its service area, in two different counties (and two different Local Education Areas, or LEAs.)

During Self-Assessment: Aggregated data from the family satisfaction survey that was completed prior to the program’s annual Self-Assessment pointed to a concern among families of children who will be transitioning to kindergarten. These parents and family members, especially those whose primary language is not English, lacked confidence in how to communicate with school staff. Parents of children enrolled in Early Head Start as well as those whose children are enrolled in Head Start expressed a corollary concern about how their children will do in kindergarten.

During Planning: Based on this data, ACE’s planning committee, consisting of management team members and representatives from the governing body and Policy Council, decided to develop a new program goal to strengthen the program’s transition process. In developing its action plan, the planning committee sought input from representatives of the LEAs and receiving school principals as well as from the governing body member with early childhood expertise.

Sample Program Goal: Always Cutting Edge (ACE) Head Start/Early Head Start program will strengthen transition to school for children and families so that Head Start children succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

The Planning Team developed four **SMART** objectives and identified several expected outcomes for the goal. They also decided on the data sources that they would use to track progress.

Objective	Expected Outcomes	Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress
<p>1. ACE Head Start program will develop a process for data sharing between ACE and its eight Local Education Agencies (LEAs). By the end of year one, ACE will have language related to data sharing in signed MOUs with two pilot LEAs. By the end of five years, ACE will have the language included in all eight MOUs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child outcomes data from the Head Start program’s child assessment system will, with parental permission, be electronically transmitted to each receiving school. • The Head Start program will have access to aggregated longitudinal data about Head Start children’s continued progress on the school system’s outcomes through third grade. • Through joint review of data, the school system will have a better understanding of the needs of Head Start children and families as they transition to the schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed MOUs reflecting data-sharing agreement • Longitudinal data received from schools • Reports from school system representatives on their understanding of Head Start children and family needs
<p>2. ACE Head Start program will complete and sign transition plans with all receiving schools. ACE will have signed transition plans with 25 percent of its receiving schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 percent by the end of Year 2 • 60 percent by the end of Year 3 • 80 percent by the end of Year 4 • 100 percent by the end of Year 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children will visit receiving classrooms prior to entering. • Families will feel more welcomed in receiving schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed transition plans • Site visit logs • Parent focus group and parent survey summaries • Reports from kindergarten teachers about the success of the visits

Objective	Expected Outcomes	Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress
<p>3. ACE will strengthen parents' understanding of the importance of their role in supporting their children's transition to school as measured by their participation in transitions events. ACE will increase each of the following by 20 percent per year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of parents who attend kindergarten registration • Number of parents who attend HS parent meeting with PTA representatives • Number of parents who accompany their children on site visits to the school their child will attend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/family members will attend kindergarten registration and accompany their children on site visits to the school their child will attend; they will express increased satisfaction with transition, especially families whose primary language is not English. • Children will show less "summer fadeout" when they enter kindergarten and exhibit fewer challenging behaviors during the first two months of school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten registration and data from site-visit logs • Parent satisfaction surveys • Results of parent focus group on transition pilot • Reports from kindergarten teachers
<p>4. ACE Head Start program will ensure that Head Start children with special health care needs successfully transition to the receiving school(s) as measured by an increase in the percentage of parents making at least one contact with school personnel to discuss their child's individual health needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In year one, parent contact with the receiving school will increase from 35 percent to 55 percent. • It will increase by 10 percent each subsequent year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with special health care needs will be able to attend school, as schools will be better prepared and able to receive them. • Parents of children with special health care needs will know with whom to communicate and will be able to communicate more frequently with their child's school personnel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of attendance data from receiving schools, including disaggregated data for children with special health care needs • Analysis of parent satisfaction survey, including disaggregated data from parents of children with special health care needs

Remember that this is an example. If your program has a goal related to transition to school, you might write it differently and have different objectives and expected outcomes based on your own program's strengths and needs.

ACE Head Start program then created action plans for each of the objectives. Here is an example of the action plan for **Objective 3: ACE Head Start will strengthen parents’ understanding of the importance of their role in supporting their children’s transition to Head Start and/or school.**

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
1. Work with receiving schools to ensure that kindergarten registration events are held at places and times convenient for Head Start parents; ensure that materials are translated and interpreters are present as needed.	Head Start director	Late fall	Budget for interpreters.
2. Co-create for and with parents a brochure— <i>Kick Off to Kindergarten</i> —in the home languages of all children in the program.	Education manager and parents whose children have transitioned, including some who do not speak English and/or are recent immigrants	Late fall	Work with LEAs to jointly fund the cost of the brochure design, translation, and printing. Budget expenses accordingly.
3. Distribute brochures to all families whose children are entering kindergarten.	Teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors	Early winter	
4. During home visits and at Parent Committee meetings, engage families about the importance of their role for a smooth transition to kindergarten. Ensure that staff have conversations in families’ home languages about opportunities for family engagement in the new school;	Family engagement staff and home visitors	Winter	Budget for interpreters as needed.
5. Talk with parents about transition from EHS to Head Start/preschool during goal-setting discussions.	EHS and Head Start teachers, home visitors, and family engagement staff	At each goal-setting discussion	

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
6. Provide parents with a packet of materials that includes information in their home language about all health screening and other health-related kindergarten requirements, and help parents to compile their child's kindergarten health records.	Health services staff, family engagement staff, and home visitors	Prior to kindergarten registration events	Work with LEAs to jointly fund the cost of parent informational materials on health-related kindergarten requirements. Budget for program's portion of translation, printing, and purchase of folders.
7. Work with parents to initiate a summer "book backpack" project. Participate in kindergarten registration events and distribute the book backpacks during these events.	Education manager, family engagement staff, and community partnerships manager	Spring	Obtain community funding for summer book backpacks.
8. Discuss transportation issues and any potential challenges that may occur.	Family engagement staff and home visitors	Late spring	
9. Invite parent association representatives from receiving elementary schools to come to a parent meeting; make sure that interpreters are available.	Director and community partnerships manager	Early spring	Budget for interpreters. Budget for snacks for meeting.
10. Set up visits for transitioning parents and children to their child's elementary school; make sure that interpreters are available.	Education managers with teachers and home visitors	Late spring	Budget for interpreters.
11. Conduct focus groups with a diverse group of EHS/HS families to discuss the transition process and obtain their feedback.	EHS and Head Start family engagement staff and home visitors	Late spring	
12. Review what worked well in the transition process and identify any areas for improvement.	Management team with input from all staff	Very late spring	
13. Revise process as needed.	Management team	Review during ongoing monitoring	

Example 2

This example shows how a program—after it has collected and analyzed school readiness data from multiple years—proceeds to set a new program-wide goal about language acquisition. Its planning process is outlined in the scenario. The grid that follows outlines the steps the program will take based on its planning and review process.

SCENARIO

The Always Be Conscientious (ABC) Head Start Program has had its school readiness goals in place for the past two school years, and its governing body and Policy Council have approved them. The program has collected data and compared child outcomes data, Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) scores, performance on kindergarten entrance assessments, and data from other sources to determine progress on the school readiness goals. The program examines progress each quarter and at the end of the year as well as trends over time.

During ongoing monitoring: The staff review and compare child outcome reports and determine that children in the ABC Head Start Program have consistently scored below the norm on the vocabulary measure used as part of the school district’s kindergarten readiness assessment. An aggregation of last year’s school readiness child data shows that mean scores for Head Start children on all language measures were below the typical scores for children of their age. Scores were in the same range the previous year. While children do make progress on language measures, the majority of children transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten did not reach age-level scores. By reviewing subgroups within the program, the staff could see variability among the classrooms. In a small number of classrooms, children scored at or above age level. The staff determined that they could use the data to make both program-wide and individual classroom adjustments.

During Self-Assessment: ABC’s Self-Assessment (SA) team reviewed the multiyear school readiness data and disaggregated the school readiness results by subgroups: classrooms, experience level, and educational level of teachers; children who were in their first year of Head Start; children in their second year of Head Start; children who transitioned into Head Start from ABC’s Early Head Start vs. those who did not; and children who are dual language learners. After reviewing the data and discussing what is working in the classrooms where children have the higher scores, the SA team recommended that ABC’s professional development focus for the upcoming year be on language and literacy, with an emphasis on increasing children’s vocabularies; that ABC select and implement a supplemental curriculum to enhance the language components of teaching and learning; and that ABC fund a program of coaching support for classroom teachers. The team also recommended that the teachers in the classrooms with higher-scoring children assist with planning language activities and supports across all program areas and through peer coaching with other teachers.

During planning: The ABC planning committee accepts the SA team’s recommendations and sets the following new program goal:

Sample Program Goal: Always Be Conscientious (ABC) Early Head Start/Head Start program will enhance its educational services to improve the vocabularies of enrolled children to maximize their potential to enter kindergarten with a solid foundation for reading success.

Sample School Readiness Goal: Children will comprehend and use increasingly complex and varied vocabularies in their home language and English.

Objective: To strengthen the ability of teachers, family child care providers, home visitors, and parents to improve the vocabulary of enrolled children in their home language and English as measured by improved scores on child assessment measures. Mean scores will improve by 50 percent by the end of the program year.

Expected Outcome: Children will enter kindergarten with age-appropriate receptive and expressive vocabulary in their home language and English.

This program organized and wrote its action plans according to area (e.g., teaching and learning; parent and family engagement; community engagement; health services; and program management) so that staff understand their specific roles and responsibilities as they relate to accomplishing this goal. See the example on the following page.



Program Goal: ABC Head Start will enhance its educational services to improve the vocabularies of enrolled children to maximize their potential to enter kindergarten with a solid foundation for reading success.

Objective: To strengthen the ability of teachers, home visitors, family child care providers, and parents to improve vocabulary of enrolled children in their home language and English, as measured by improved scores on child assessment measures. Mean scores will improve by 50 percent by the end of program year.

Expected Outcome: Children will enter kindergarten with age-appropriate receptive and expressive vocabulary in their home language and English.



School Readiness Goal:

Children will comprehend and use increasingly complex and varied vocabularies in their home language and English.

Program Activities That Support BOTH Goals AND Objectives

Who

By When

Financial Supports

Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress

Teaching and Learning		Who	By When	Financial Supports	Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress
1.	Establish a year-long professional development (PD) plan focused on vocabulary.	Education manager and coach	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure T/TA funds support PD plan. • Budget for new language curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scores on child assessment measures • Child assessments that measure the growth in home language
2.	Provide small-group coaching using Teachers Learning and Collaborating (TLC) materials focused on language-based responsive processes through the use of 15-minute in-service language suites, “Language Modeling and Conversations”; National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness’s (NCCLR) Planned Language Approach (PLA) trainings; and, when appropriate, the EHS National Resource Center’s Infant-Toddler Supplements and NCCLR <i>Making It Work!</i> for American Indian programs.	Site managers supervised by new coach	Early Fall		
3.	Review current curriculum and consider adding a language and literacy supplement; ensure current curriculum is responsive to dual language learners.	Education manager, site manager, coach, teachers, and home visitors	Late Fall		
4.	Observe classrooms and home visits; support staff and parents’ use of meaningful vocabulary that increases in complexity over time in the home language(s) and English.	Coach	Winter/Spring		

Program Activities That Support BOTH Goals AND Objectives	Who	By When	Financial Supports	Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress
Parent and Family Engagement				
1. Conduct family events about the importance of talking with children in the home language; read books and use vocabulary in the home language. Share dialogic reading strategies. Use NCCLR’s <i>Home Language Series</i> to develop trainings (available at http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/ncclrquickguide.htm).	Family support manager	Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure your supply budget will cover cost of book bags. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track parent participation with each effort. • Disaggregate child assessment data for children whose parents participate in each effort. • Track any increase in book reading in home language and English, as reported by families.
2. Partner with families to create and use “book bags” to send back and forth between home and Head Start or to leave with families to use in their homes. These bags include a selection of books that are culturally responsive and are in the home language and English. Refer to the NCCLR’s guides for selecting culturally appropriate books in languages other than English and for using bilingual books (all available at http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/).	Family support manager, teachers, and home visitors	Fall		
3. Invite families to tape their favorite books or stories in their home language(s).	Family support manager and site managers	Late Fall		
4. Collect favorite “words of the week” from staff and families to use in newsletters and/or to post in classrooms in English and home language(s).	Family support manager, site manager, teachers, and home visitors	Winter		
Community Engagement				
1. Develop a partnership with the local library system to increase use of libraries by parents, and increase visits to EHS/HS program by children’s librarians. Share with libraries NCCLR’s resources on selecting culturally appropriate books in languages other than English.	Head Start director and community engagement manager	Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed MOU • Parent reports. Aggregate # with library cards, # borrowing books, and # participating in events. • Library report # of visits to centers and homes. • Family reports are tracked to reflect any increase in book reading in home language and English, as appropriate.
2. Pilot library initiative at two local libraries.	Education manager	All year		

**Program Activities That Support
BOTH Goals AND Objectives**

Who

By When

**Financial
Supports**

**Data Tools or Methods
for Tracking Progress**

Health Services					
1.	Coordinate with attendance initiative to make sure children and families participate in home visits and attend school regularly.	Health manager	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records • Screening results • Disaggregated child assessment data of children most often absent from school • Home visitors and teachers survey on health vocabulary
2.	Provide home visitors and teachers with age-appropriate, health-related vocabulary in home language(s) and in English.	Health manager and site managers	Winter		
3.	Review results of hearing screenings to make sure that children who did not pass their hearing screening were referred for evaluation and services when indicated.	Health managers and site managers	Late Fall		
Program Management					
1.	Recruit and hire coaches with expertise in working with children who are developing one or more languages; and, when possible, recruit and hire bilingual coaches.	Head Start director and governing body	July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek new funding for coaches. • Budget for more staff time/ substitutes. • Budget for new language and literacy curriculum supplement and for staff training on the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated budget • PLA planning document compiled • Disaggregated child assessment data on DLLs with teachers who have bilingual coaches
2.	Ensure that teachers and home visitors have time to participate in coaching and to attend other trainings by hiring substitute staff.	Human resource director	August		
3.	Report regularly to governing body, Policy Council, and other stakeholders on progress in meeting goals.	Head Start director and education manager	July		
4.	Identify and purchase a new language and literacy curriculum supplement that is responsive to all children, including dual language learners. Train teachers on the curriculum.	Head Start director and education manager	August		
5.	Provide training for teachers and families on dialogic reading.	Education manager and consultants	Fall/Winter		
6.	Ensure that management staff and other key personnel participate in NCCLR's Planned Language Approach (PLA) trainings.	Director, management team, and site directors	Fall		

Conclusion

Programs write their five-year and annual action plans in many different ways. This paper shows two examples of what a program's goals, objectives, expected outcomes, and plans could look like based on the data that the program collects through its community assessment and Self-Assessment. When writing your own plans, you may find helpful the sample forms that follow. Writing measurable objectives and expected outcomes and considering the data to collect to understand your progress will serve you well in completing your baseline and continuation applications for the five-year project period.

Sample Forms

Action Plan

Program Goal: (165 char.) _____

Objectives: (165 char.) _____

Expected Outcome(s): _____

(1,000 char.) _____

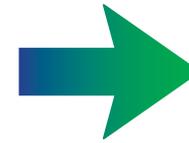
Please note, there is a character limit on the columns below. Column 1: 1,231; Column 2-4: 384

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
1.			
2.			

Please note, there is a character limit on the columns below. Column 1: 1,231; Column 2-4: 384

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
3.			
4.			
5.			

Program Goal: (246 char.)
Objective: (246 char.)
Expected Outcome: (246 char.)



School Readiness Goal: (246 char.)

Please note, there is a character limit on the columns below. Column 1: 1,898; Column 2-5: 611

Program Activities That Support BOTH Goals AND Objectives	Who	By When	Financial Supports	Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress
Teaching and Learning				

Please note, there is a character limit on the columns below. Column 1: 3,130; Column 2-5: 1,030

Program Activities That Support BOTH Goals AND Objectives	Who	By When	Financial Supports	Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress
Parent and Family Engagement				

Please note, there is a character limit on the columns below. Column 1: 3,130; Column 2–5: 1,030

Program Activities That Support BOTH Goals AND Objectives	Who	By When	Financial Supports	Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress
Community Engagement				

Please note, there is a character limit on the columns below. Column 1: 3,130; Column 2-5: 1,030

Program Activities That Support BOTH Goals AND Objectives	Who	By When	Financial Supports	Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress
Health Services				

Please note, there is a character limit on the columns below. Column 1: 3,130; Column 2–5: 1,030

Program Activities That Support BOTH Goals AND Objectives	Who	By When	Financial Supports	Data Tools or Methods for Tracking Progress
Program Management				