

## Head Start A to Z Leadership and Governance Executive Summary

We hope you're thrilled to be starting a new role as a Head Start leader where you can develop a program that's making a real impact in your community. It's important to recognize this role comes with a set of responsibilities that may at first seem overwhelming.

The great news is Head Start has built into its structure a set of leadership and governance principles that can provide support throughout your Head Start journey. It's this structure that fosters an environment that supports continuous program improvement and innovation and is critical to providing quality services in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

This approach, also known as inclusive leadership, has been a cornerstone of Head Start's mission since its inception in 1965. It continues to be mandated by the Head Start Act of 2007 and the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

We recommend you review the Head Start A to Z Leadership and Governance training module in full, which should answer many questions you may have. However, this video will give you a high-level overview of how the system works ...

Within Head Start, the governing body or Tribal Council, the Policy Council, and management staff provide leadership, governance, and strategic direction.

Each entity has distinct roles and responsibilities, and brings unique perspectives to the process. The governing body or Tribal Council assumes legal and fiscal responsibility for the program. The parents and community partners in the Policy Council help set direction. The management staff oversee day-to-day operations. Together, they pursue the shared goal of providing the strong leadership, direction, and guidance needed to build responsive Head Start programs.

As a Head Start leader, you'll be responsible for ensuring that the governing body or Tribal Council and Policy Council composition complies with the Head Start Act. And, it's important to ensure that those members receive ongoing training and technical assistance so they can fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

The inclusive leadership approach guarantees that the unique perspective of each entity is reflected in legal and fiscal oversight, program direction, and day-to-day operations, resulting in better strategic decision-making. By understanding how these three groups work together and how to establish positive relationships among them, Head Start programs are better equipped to deliver high-quality services to the children and families they serve.

Learn more about the regulations and principles that inform Head Start leadership and governance in the series Learning for New Leaders: Head Start A to Z.