HOW HEAD START GRANTEES SET AND USE SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

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Overview

Under the Improving Head Start School Readiness Act of 2007, Head Start and Early Head Start grantees are required to develop locally defined school readiness goals and to evaluate children's progress toward these goals. This study, School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning, examined how local grantees set school readiness goals, how they collect and analyze data to track progress toward goals, and how they use these data in program planning and practice to improve program functioning. It was conducted by the Urban Institute under contract to the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Findings are based on a telephone survey of Head Start and Early Head Start program directors and managers from a sample of 73 grantees across the United States, follow-up site visits to 11 of these grantees, and in-depth telephone interviews with program directors and education managers of four American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) grantees. Survey results were weighted to represent all grantees other than migrant and seasonal, AIAN, and interim grantees.

Key Findings

- **Grantees have largely embraced the school readiness goals requirements and report using the goals and data in various ways.** Nearly all (99 percent) grantees had set school readiness goals, and all produced and looked at aggregate analyses of school readiness data at least a few times a year, according to survey data. Moreover, nearly all grantees agreed that setting goals was a good use of time (84 percent) and that having goals will be useful (93 percent). Goals and data were seen as particularly useful for informing professional development and planning of classroom activities.

- **Assessment tools played a central role in shaping goals and data use.** Comprehensive assessment tools greatly influenced how goals were defined and data were analyzed. According to site visit data, many grantees derived all measures related to their school readiness goals from a single assessment tool. During site visits, several grantees described selecting goals based on measures available in their assessment tool.

- **Grantees were still learning to analyze and interpret school readiness data**. A majority of grantees rated analyzing data related to goals as either a medium (43 percent) or big (22 percent) challenge. Much of the concern centered on staff capacity. Though a majority of grantees (65 percent) expressed confidence that their staff knew how to collect valid and reliable data, only one-third (34 percent) agreed that staff knew how to interpret data reports.

- **Office of Head Start (OHS) guidance and technical assistance were important as grantees implemented school readiness goals requirements.** In developing their school readiness goals, many grantees looked to written materials from OHS and its technical assistance network. Many grantees relied heavily on the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*. Several program directors and managers also mentioned the support received from OHS-sponsored technical assistance specialists and ACF regional Head Start Program Specialists. Continued technical assistance will be needed as grantees revise their goals, build capacity to analyze goals-related data, and increasingly use goals to inform program planning and practice.

Executive Summary

I. Introduction

Established in 1965, Head Start has a long history of preparing children for school. It is only recently, however, that local grantees have been formally required to develop school readiness goals and to analyze data on children's progress toward these goals. The process of setting school readiness goals and analyzing school readiness data is expected to improve program quality across both low- and high-performing Head Start programs.

In fall 2012, the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) contracted with the Urban Institute to conduct a study to learn how local Head Start and Early Head Start grantees are interpreting and implementing the school readiness goals requirements that were enacted in 2007. The goal of the two-year School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning study was to improve understanding of how local Head Start and Early Head Start grantees define, measure, and communicate school readiness goals; how they collect and analyze data to track progress toward goals; and how they use these data in program planning and practice to improve program functioning. Study results are expected to inform ongoing training and technical assistance (T/TA) efforts on effectively using school readiness goals to improve program quality.

The study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What school readiness goals do Head Start and Early Head Start grantees set?
2. What does the process of setting school readiness goals look like?
3. How do grantees analyze data and report progress? That is, how do grantees use and analyze data to monitor progress toward goals? How do grantees report progress on goals?
4. How do grantees use school readiness goals and data to inform program planning and improvement efforts?

II. Methods

The research design combined a telephone survey of Head Start and Early Head Start program directors and managers with follow-up site visits to a subset of these grantees to learn more about how they set and

use school readiness goals. In addition, researchers conducted in-depth telephone interviews with program directors and education managers of four American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) grantees. All data collection occurred during the 2013–14 school year.

The telephone survey was designed as a 45-minute, largely closed-ended survey of Head Start and Early Head Start program directors (or education managers) from grantees across the United States. A purposive sample of 90 grantees was selected, stratified across grantees operating only Early Head Start (EHS-only) programs, only Head Start (HS-only) programs and grantees operating both programs (HS/EHS); 73 of these grantees (81 percent) completed the survey. Raking weights were applied to adjust sample estimates to account for nonresponse and the disproportionate sampling of grantees with certain characteristics. Weighted survey findings represent the population of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees operating in 2011–12 (and still operating in fall 2013), other than migrant and seasonal grantees, AIAN grantees, grantees in US territories, and interim grantees.

During follow-up site visits to a subset of 11 of these grantees, the research team conducted qualitative interviews with program directors, program managers, governing body representatives, Policy Council members, teachers, home visitors, and parents. Visited grantees included five HS-only grantees and six HS/EHS grantees. Researchers reviewed and analyzed the written school readiness goals from those same 11 grantees.

Finally, in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with Head Start directors and education managers of four AIAN grantees. Because a sufficiently large number could not be included in the telephone survey, the team instead conducted interviews with open-ended questions to gather and report exploratory information on the specific experiences of AIAN grantees.

III. What School Readiness Goals Do Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees Set?

Prior to this study, little information existed regarding Head Start grantees' written school readiness goals. Chapter 3 presents the findings from a review of school readiness goals documents that were collected from the 11 grantees participating in the site visits.

What Do the Goals Look Like?

There is substantial variation in the format and specificity of the local goals documents provided by the 11 programs. Four programs shared simplified documents that listed the goals by the domains identified in the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* (the *Framework*), with little or no additional information. One of these documents was a pamphlet to be handed out to parents. Seven of the 11 programs provided more comprehensive documents that included information about assessment tools and objectives related to the goals. Four of these seven did a cross-walk matching their own goals with state and/or local school guidelines.

How Closely Do Programs Align Goals with the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*?

Four of the 11 grantees structured their school readiness goals around all 37 domain elements identified in the *Framework*; no additional goals were included. Five grantees structured their goals around the five broad dimensions in the *Framework*, but defined their own subgoals within these domains. Two grantees used a combination of the five broad dimensions from the *Framework* as well as other goals.

How Many Goals Do Grantees Set?

The number of goals set by the 11 grantees ranged from 5 to 37 goals. As mentioned, four programs wrote a goal for each of the 37 domain elements from the *Framework*. Two grantees had only five goals, based on the five broad dimensions in the *Framework*; however, they tied multiple objectives or subgoals to each goal.

Do Grantees Prioritize Their Goals and, If So, How?

All goals are mentioned and given equal weight in the written goals documents. However, in interviews, some respondents felt that some goals were prioritized more than others in terms of the emphasis placed on activities to support work on that goal. Literacy was cited as a priority by respondents in seven programs and socio-emotional skills as a priority by respondents in five programs. Math and physical health were also mentioned. However, some respondents within these same programs said that all goals were important.

IV. What Does the Process of Setting School Readiness Goals Look Like?

A primary motivation for this research was to better understand the process through which Head Start grantees set their school readiness goals. Chapter 4 presents findings on this topic based on data from the telephone survey, site visits, and tribal interviews.

How Do Grantees Approach the Process of Setting School Readiness Goals?

According to the survey, most grantees (89 percent) established a "special committee to help with the school readiness goal-setting process." Further details gathered during site visits suggest that approaches to collaboration varied. The process of writing school readiness goals was more management driven in some programs; in others it was more characterized by collaborative teams, high levels of parent involvement, or being TA driven.

Education managers were most often responsible for managing the day-to-day work of setting the goals (59 percent of grantees), and Head Start and Early Head Start program directors most often provided overall direction and supervision (53 percent of grantees). Many others—including other managers, classroom staff, site directors, Head Start parents, and Policy Council members—had a moderate-to-high level of involvement in deciding on goals. Other groups of staff and external stakeholders—including home visitors and family service workers, governing boards, local education agencies, community partners, and external consultants—were somewhat less likely to be involved, according to survey data.

What Resources Do Grantees Consult When Setting Goals?

Survey and site visit data indicated that when setting goals grantees often started with the *Framework*, state early learning standards, and their curriculum and assessment tools. Other important resources included guidance from the Office of Head Start (OHS) on the goals requirements and materials from ACF's online Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC), Head Start's National T/TA Centers, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). A few grantees mentioned attending webinars and national training conferences. When asked what helped move along the goal-setting process, several program directors and managers mentioned the support received from OHS-sponsored T/TA specialists and ACF regional Head Start program specialists.

The comprehensive assessment tools that most grantees were already using before the goals mandate played a large role in shaping the goals that were selected, according to site visit interviews and open-ended responses to the telephone survey. In addition, the process of developing school readiness goals often involved looking at their child assessment data from the previous year, or multiple years if available, to determine which areas were in need of improvement.

What Are Grantees' Plans for Revising School Readiness Goals?

According to the survey data, just over two-thirds of grantees (68 percent) thought they would revise their school readiness goals every year. Other grantees thought they would make revisions every few years or, in some cases, throughout the course of each year. A similar pattern was seen in the site visit interviews; most grantees described their goals as a living document they planned to revisit, revise, and/or update to reflect changes in their focus over time.

What Challenges Were Faced When Setting School Readiness Goals?

According to the telephone survey, nearly three-fourths (74 percent) of grantees felt that finding time for the school readiness goal-setting process was a big or medium challenge. Despite this challenge, a large majority of grantees (84 percent) reported that setting school readiness goals was a good use of time.

Close to three-fourths (74 percent) of grantees also reported that engaging parents in the process of setting goals was a big or medium challenge. However, relatively few (only 18 percent) reported that parents had little to no involvement in deciding on school readiness goals.

More than half (60 percent) reported that obtaining enough information about OHS expectations about what would meet the requirements for setting school readiness goals was a big or medium challenge. This concern was also raised in site visit interviews. For example, grantees described being unclear on OHS expectations for how many goals they should have, how detailed the goal statements should be, and whether grantees needed to set specific benchmarks for progress. Several grantees felt it would have been helpful to have had more specific guidance before they were expected to begin the work of setting goals.

Setting goals appeared to be somewhat more challenging for EHS-only and HS/EHS grantees than for HS-only grantees. Eighty-three percent of HS-only grantees agreed they had the information they needed to set goals, but only 54 percent of EHS-only and 55 percent of HS/EHS grantees agreed with the statement. Site visit respondents further explained that they were initially uncertain how to proceed with

setting goals for EHS because the guidance on school readiness goals for infants and toddlers was released after the guidance for preschoolers. Similarly, during site visits, programs operating different service options reported challenges establishing goals that would be applicable, and feasible to implement, across center-based, home-based, and other settings.

Grantees in site visits also felt it was challenging to implement the school readiness goals requirements at the same time as other transitions, such as the concurrent shifts to a new assessment tool. Some grantees also mentioned confusion about how Head Start school readiness goals requirements related to other Head Start goal requirements (e.g., parent, family, and community engagement and overall program goals) and concern about how to integrate these different sets of goals. Finally, some grantees had concerns about the potential that the focus on school readiness goals would encourage a focus on academically oriented outcomes rather than the whole child.

What Does the Process of Setting School Readiness Goals Look Like among AIAN Grantees?

Like grantees in the main study, the four grantees interviewed for the AIAN case studies took different approaches to the work of setting their goals, ranging from a heavily management-driven approach (with input from others at various points) to a more collaborative approach involving management, frontline staff, and parents. Three of the four grantees said OHS-sponsored T/TA specialists were useful; the fourth relied instead on peer support networks. Two of the four programs highlighted the importance of integrating culture-specific objectives into their school readiness plans and provided examples of how they accomplished this. AIAN grantees interviewed for this study described many of the same challenges that non-AIAN programs confronted when responding to the school readiness goals mandate, including lack of clear guidance from OHS initially and difficulty engaging parents.

V. How Do Grantees Analyze Data and Report Progress?

The Head Start school readiness goals mandate requires grantees not only to set goals, but also to use data on school readiness to evaluate progress toward goals. Chapter 5 presents survey, site visit, and tribal interview findings on this topic.

How Do Grantees Measure Progress toward School Readiness Goals?

A first step toward evaluating progress toward school readiness goals is to specify progress measures related to each goal. Most grantees (86 percent) reported having measures for all goals, and the remaining 14 percent have measures for most goals. Three-fourths said it was no challenge (45 percent) or a small challenge (31 percent) to find measures to align with their goals; only 11 percent reported it was a big challenge.

Several grantees in the site visits described the process of selecting measures to assess progress toward goals as involving a mapping of their goals against the items in their primary child assessment tool. In conversations with staff during the site visits, it appeared that some staff made little distinction between the developmental objectives in their assessment tools and the school readiness goals adopted by their program.

What Is Grantees' Capacity for Collecting and Analyzing School Readiness Data?

Only a minority of grantees reported shortages in technology or staff capacity for collecting and analyzing school readiness data. Many grantees (62 percent) reported making improvements in their technological infrastructure as a result of the school readiness goals requirements, and three-fourths (75 percent) of grantees reported having the technology needed to manage and analyze data.

Survey results also suggest that most grantees have enough staff to collect school readiness data, and relatively few grantees hired additional staff to implement the mandate. However, during in-depth interviews, concerns were raised about increased time burden on the teaching staff as a result of collecting data on child outcomes.

Survey data suggest that EHS-only grantees may be less confident than HS-only or HS/EHS grantees that they have enough staff to collect data or that their staff were knowledgeable about collecting reliable data.

How Often Do Grantees Conduct Aggregate Analyses of School Readiness Data?

All programs reported looking at aggregate school readiness data three times a year or more, and in some cases monthly or even weekly.

What Challenges Do Grantees Face with Data Analysis and Interpretation?

Despite reviewing data throughout the year, a majority of grantees rated analyzing data related to goals as either a medium (43 percent) or big (22 percent) challenge. Much of the concern centered on staff capacity; staff are still learning to produce and use school readiness data. Although a majority of grantees (65 percent) expressed confidence that their staff were knowledgeable about *collecting* valid and reliable data, only one-third (34 percent) agreed that staff were knowledgeable about *interpreting* data reports.

EHS grantees were somewhat more likely than HS grantees to report concerns about interpreting data reports. In addition, collecting child assessment data was harder for staff working in home-based services and family child care than for teachers in center-based programs, according to site visit data.

During the site visits, education managers expressed different levels of comfort with data analysis; some expressed unease about their math and data analysis skills. In some cases, this was due to lack of familiarity with relatively new computer assessment systems. Program staff at all levels generally expressed more comfort looking at the school readiness progress of individual children.

How Do Grantees Report on Progress to Parents, the Policy Council, and the Governing Body?

Although three-fourths of grantees reported sharing program-level aggregate data with parents, parents who were interviewed focused on reports describing their own child's progress. Many parents reported receiving more formal reports three times a year, often in parent-teacher conferences or home visits, with interim reports produced on a more casual basis. Parents enjoyed getting information about their child's progress, and found it useful to see how their child was doing developmentally.

All programs share aggregate data with the Policy Council, and 99 percent share such data with the governing body, according to the survey data. Site visit data suggest that written reports are typically presented to the Policy Council and the governing body at scheduled meetings and are often accompanied by presentations walking through the reports.

How Do AIAN Grantees Analyze Data and Report Progress?

All four AIAN grantees reported looking at school readiness goals data at least three times per year. Three of the four grantees mentioned giving parents information about their own child's school readiness outcomes. Like grantees in the main study, AIAN grantees share this information through parent-teacher

conferences. All four grantees also share aggregate data on progress toward goals with their program's Policy Council and tribal government.

VI. How Do Head Start Grantees Use School Readiness Goals and Data to Inform Program Planning and Practice?

According to federal regulation, Head Start grantees are required to set school readiness goals, collect data to measure progress toward goals, and to use that data "in combination with other program data . . . to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum, instruction, professional development, program design and other program decisions." Chapter 6 draws on data from the telephone survey, site visits, and tribal interviews to offer a first look at how grantees are using their goals and related data to inform program planning and practice.

Do Grantees View School Readiness Goals As Useful?

Grantees had positive feedback when asked about the usefulness of the school readiness goals mandate. Ninety-three percent of survey respondents agreed "having school readiness goals will be useful," and only 7 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. None of the survey respondents disagreed with the statement, reflecting the widespread buy-in of program directors and education managers in the usefulness of school readiness goals.

Although the majority of EHS-only grantees saw benefits to school readiness goals, they were not as overwhelmingly positive as other grantees. According to the survey data, 77 percent of EHS-only grantees agreed that having school readiness goals will be useful, compared to 100 percent of HS-only and 91 percent of HS/EHS grantees. Yet during the site visits, many Early Head Start program directors and staff said they welcomed being part of a school readiness discussion that is sometimes limited to Head Start preschoolers.

How Are School Readiness Goals Used by Program Staff?

Survey respondents reported that having goals is useful for a range of purposes, including staff professional development, teacher planning for daily classroom activities, programwide strategic planning, and teachers' work with individual children.

Ways in which school readiness goals were helpful to program managers with planning and decisionmaking were further elaborated during site visits. First, data tracking progress toward school readiness goals were used to both plan programwide professional development activities and to target training and support to specific teachers. In addition, school readiness goals helped managers allocate resources for classroom materials and make staffing decisions. Finally, program directors and managers in several of the programs visited reported they use data more frequently and purposively than they had prior to the school readiness mandate.

Site visit respondents reported that school readiness goals helped teachers be more intentional in planning and instruction. In addition, teachers used school readiness goals and data when identifying the specific needs of individual children. Several teachers also mentioned that reviewing data reports has helped them to identify areas in which they need additional training and support. A few teachers mentioned that school readiness goals were useful in validating their work as teachers. Finally, teachers and home visitors felt that having a clear set of school readiness goals helped them communicate more effectively with parents. Staff commonly reported seeing an improvement in parents' understanding of what school readiness means.

What Were Grantees' Concerns about the Goals Mandate?

One concern noted during the site visit interviews was increased time burden on teaching staff. Documenting children's work in the classroom, collecting reliable assessment data, entering and analyzing data, reporting on outcomes, revising goals, and tailoring instruction require a significant amount of time and resources. Some teachers and administrators worried about teachers not being able to spend as much time interacting with children. In a few programs, teachers reported some technological shortages, such as having to share computers with multiple peers or not having Internet access to use online data collection tools.

In addition, some site visit respondents were concerned that the increased focus on school readiness would lead to insufficient attention to Head Start's mission of addressing comprehensive child and family needs. Other respondents mentioned a concern that their program's goals would end up overly slanted toward outcomes that can be easily measured with a given child assessment tool. Some respondents also reported challenges in defining and measuring school readiness across ages and settings.

What Supports Do Grantees Want to Better Meet the School Readiness Goals Mandate?

When asked what supports their programs needed to better meet the mandate, several site visit respondents mentioned wanting additional technical assistance better tailored to their individual program and its needs. Some felt that the available T/TA materials were too generic and needed to better consider factors such as program size and state requirements to use particular assessment tools. In the same vein, respondents wanted additional opportunities to network with other grantees with similar characteristics. Another request was for clearer expectations from OHS about how written goals should appear. Finally, many respondents asked for help building capacity to better analyze data, including supports for enhancing electronic data systems, and further T/TA on data analysis and interpretation.

How Do AIAN Grantees Use School Readiness Goals and Data to Inform Program Planning and Practice?

Two of the four interviewed AIAN grantees felt that the school readiness goals were a positive addition to their program, and two had more mixed views. One grantee whose view was more mixed expressed concern that the goals requirements overlapped with requirements already in place. The other felt it was too soon to tell whether the requirements would be helpful to the program. All four AIAN grantees reported using school readiness goals and related data to identify strengths and needs at the program, classroom, and/or individual child or teacher levels.

VII. Conclusion

This research study provides the first systematic analysis of how Head Start and Early Head Start grantees are responding to the federal mandate to set school readiness goals for children in their programs and to collect and use data measuring progress toward the goals. Chapter 7 discusses six cross-cutting themes that emerged from the research and outlines implications for policy, practice, and further research.

Six Cross-Cutting Themes

- **Grantees have largely embraced the school readiness goals requirements and reported using the goals and data in various ways.** Grantees reported widespread compliance with key school readiness goals requirements. Moreover, the study's findings suggest that grantees'

acceptance of the school readiness mandate goes beyond mere compliance. For example, nearly all survey respondents agreed that setting goals was a good use of time and that having school readiness goals will be useful in general. Goals and data were seen as particularly useful for staff professional development and teacher planning for daily classroom activities. Although the in-depth interviews revealed some concerns about the time spent on school readiness goals and data collection and some questions about whether the mandate was necessary, overall, the research team heard more enthusiasm for the goals and school readiness data than might have been expected about a new mandate.

- **Assessment tools played a central role in shaping goals and data use.** As discussed throughout the report, comprehensive assessment tools played a central role in defining the goals and in shaping the approach to analyzing data. A review of written documents suggested many grantees derived all measures related to their school readiness goals from a single assessment tool. Moreover, several grantees in the site visits described selecting goals based on measures available in their assessment tool. Overall, grantees generally felt their comprehensive assessment tools facilitated and supported the school readiness mandate. This support means, however, that the developers of the tools played an indirect role in shaping the goals—and the specific measures and benchmarks—that grantees used in defining and measuring school readiness at the local level.

- **Time spent on school readiness goals and data was taken from other priorities.** During the site visits, some concerns were voiced about the time burden on teachers associated with collecting data on child outcomes. Another concern emerging from some of the in-depth interviews was that time and attention spent on school readiness goals took time away from work on parent, family, and community engagement goals. For the most part, the interviewees expressing these concerns also acknowledged the value of tracking children's progress toward school readiness. Yet they felt it was important for the research team to know that it increased time burdens on teaching staff and posed a danger of displacing other priorities.

- **Grantees were still learning how to analyze and interpret school readiness data.** Grantees reported collecting child assessment data across multiple domains, with at least three observations on each child for most school readiness measures. Most, though not all, grantees said they had enough staff and technology in place to collect and manage data. A bigger concern was the ability of staff to analyze and interpret the data. Survey respondents expressed mixed views regarding staff capabilities in this regard, and during the in-depth interviews, some program managers mentioned their own limitations in math and data analysis skills. Program staff at various levels expressed much more comfort with tracking the school

readiness progress of individual children than with comparing data for different groups of children. Several respondents mentioned in site visits that they would like further assistance and training on data analysis and interpretation to support their work on school readiness goals.

▪ **Early Head Start grantees appeared to have more challenges in implementing school readiness goals requirements.** Early Head Start grantees set school readiness goals and analyzed data three times a year or more often, similar to other grantees. The majority of Early Head Start grantees expressed positive views about the usefulness of school readiness goals for their programs. However, the data suggest that these grantees may have had more challenges in implementing the school readiness goals requirements. For example, EHS grantees were more likely to report not having the information needed to set school readiness goals. Early Head Start grantees also were more likely than other grantees to report staffing challenges, such as not having enough staff, and not being sure staff had the capability to collect reliable data or to interpret data reports. These apparent differences merit more study because they were based on small sample sizes, but they suggest particular challenges for Early Head Start programs. Despite the challenges, many Early Head Start directors and staff interviewed during follow-up site visits told the research team that they welcomed the opportunity to be a part of the school readiness discussion that is sometimes limited to Head Start preschoolers.

▪ **OHS guidance and technical assistance provided important supports as grantees implemented school readiness goals requirements.** In developing their school readiness goals, many grantees looked to written materials from OHS and its training and technical assistance (T/TA) network. Many grantees relied heavily on the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*. When asked what helped move along the goal-setting process, several program directors and managers also mentioned the support received from OHS-sponsored T/TA specialists and ACF regional Head Start Program Specialists. Grantees have a continuing need and desire for T/TA related to the school readiness requirements.

Implications for Policy and Technical Assistance

As grantees work to revise their goals, build capacity to analyze data related to goals, and increasingly use goals to inform program planning and practice, they will continue to rely on training and technical assistance from OHS and its T/TA network. Several ideas for future T/TA emerged from this study:

- Further guidance and T/TA on developing goals to help grantees better understand what is required per regulations and the options they have to take their school readiness plans to the next level;

- Ongoing T/TA on data analysis and data use, with such T/TA taking into account the needs of staff with different levels of expertise;

- More tailored T/TA on setting and using goals, in response to grantees' desire for T/TA that better recognizes their particular circumstances;

- Assistance identifying appropriate measures, including measures for outcomes that are hard to measure reliably with existing tools; and

- Support for technology investments and data systems, such as technology enhancement grants, for helping grantees to upgrade to their data systems.

Implications for Research

Implications for further research include studies that build on the current study by looking at school readiness goals in a broader sample, over time, or more in depth for Early Head Start, AIAN, and migrant and seasonal grantees. Further research also might delve more deeply into how school readiness goals and data affect program quality and child outcomes. Additional ideas include further research on benchmarks, grantees' technological and analytical capacity, and their use of comprehensive tools in meeting the goals requirements. Another potential study could identify best practices in setting and using goals across a diverse set of grantees. Research on these topics would help Head Start grantees with their ongoing efforts to use school readiness goals and data to improve program quality and child outcomes.

Chapter 1. Introduction

In fall 2012, the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) contracted with the Urban Institute to conduct a study to learn how local Head Start and Early Head Start programs are interpreting and implementing new requirements to develop school readiness goals and to collect data and analyze progress toward their goals. This report presents the findings of this two-year School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning study, drawing on responses to a telephone survey of Head Start and Early Head Start program directors and managers from 73 grantees across the United States, follow-up site visits to a subset of 11 of these grantees, and telephone interviews with Head Start directors and education managers of four American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) grantees.

The goal of this study was to improve understanding of how local Head Start and Early Head Start grantees define, measure, and communicate school readiness goals; how they collect and analyze data to track progress toward goals; and how they use these data to inform planning and practice to improve program functioning, and ultimately, child outcomes. The results of the study are expected to inform ongoing training and technical assistance (T/TA) efforts on effectively using school readiness goals to support ongoing quality improvement. Another purpose of the study was to develop measures related to grantee use of school readiness goals; a separate report will recommend such measures for potential use in future research.

Study Background

What Is School Readiness?

Young children's readiness for school has emerged as a critical factor for early academic achievement as well as long-term educational success. Over the past few decades, researchers have found that children's skills and behaviors upon entry to school have a significant impact on their transition to kindergarten and their overall school performance (Duncan et al. 2007). A growing body of research describes what constitutes school readiness and how to promote early learning experiences that foster school readiness, particularly for low-income children, who are more likely to have poor school readiness skills compared to their higher-income peers (Duncan et al. 1994; Isaacs 2012).

Because defining school readiness can be a difficult and controversial task, the assessment of school readiness is also challenging (Love 2001). Most experts agree that school readiness involves multiple domains of children's development. Kagan (1990) posited that readiness consists of two parts: *readiness for school*, which characterizes the specific set of skills or knowledge a child should have before he or she enters kindergarten (e.g., identifying colors, shapes, letters, and numbers), and *readiness for learning*, which stresses the developmental processes that form the basis for learning specific content (e.g., attention, motivation, and intellectual maturity). There is also consensus that school readiness goes beyond the individual child and includes families, schools, and communities. Head Start has adopted a definition of school readiness that acknowledges both the readiness of the child and the contexts in which they live:

> School readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. . . . School readiness is defined as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. (USDHHS, n.d.)

School Readiness and Head Start

Established in 1965 under President Johnson's War on Poverty, Head Start is the longest-running school readiness program in the United States (Ludwig and Miller 2007). According to its mission, Head Start aims to break the cycle of poverty and promote school readiness by "enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families" (USDHHS 2011a). Nearly 1,600 local Head Start grantees across the United States and its territories provide early education and other services to children and their families through classrooms and/or home-based approaches. Head Start targets some of the nation's most vulnerable families, including families of young children with incomes below the federal poverty threshold, and special populations such as children with disabilities, English language learners, American Indian and Alaskan natives, and children of migrant families or seasonal workers.

During the past five decades, Head Start has undergone continuous expansion and improvements, many of which have refined approaches to promote school readiness. Through the 1998 reauthorization, Congress explicitly made school readiness the major goal of Head Start and introduced higher teacher qualifications, educational performance standards, and child outcomes assessments, as well as an emphasis on family and child literacy.

Most recently, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007[1] mandated that Head Start grantees develop locally defined school readiness goals as part of their annual self-assessment. As stated in Head Start regulations,

> School readiness goals mean the expectations of children's status and progress across domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development that will improve their readiness for kindergarten (45 CFR § 1307.2).[2]

As further explained on the Office of Head Start's (OHS) web page,

> School readiness goals articulate the program's expectations of children's status and progress across the five essential domains of child development and early learning that will improve children's readiness for kindergarten. Goals are broad statements that articulate the highest developmental achievement children should attain as a result of Early Head Start and Head Start services (USDHHS 2013).

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act and accompanying regulations require local Head Start grantees to develop school readiness goals that "align with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, state early learning guidelines, and the requirements and expectations of the schools" that the children will be attending. Goals must be established in consultation with parents, meet the needs of local populations served, and address the five essential domains of school readiness [45 CFR § 1307.3(b)(1)(ii); see also Head Start Act 641A(g)(2)].

The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework[3] (the *Framework*) was issued in 2010–11 as a revision to the 2000 Child Outcomes Framework (USDHHS 2012a). The *Framework* aligns with and builds on the five essential domains of school readiness specified in the Head Start Act, ex-panding the level of detail to identify 11 domains of learning and development for children ages 3 to 5:

Physical development and health
1. Physical development and health

Social and emotional development
2. Social and emotional development

Approaches to learning
3. Creative arts expression
4. Approaches to learning

Language and literacy development
5. Language development
6. Literacy knowledge and skills

11. English language development (for programs with dual-language learners)

Cognition and general knowledge

7. Logic and reasoning

8. Mathematics knowledge and skills

9. Science knowledge and skills

10. Social studies knowledge and skills

These 11 domains are further defined through 37 domain elements. For example, the language development domain is made up of receptive language and expressive language domain elements. School readiness goals for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers must, at a minimum, address the five essential domains of school readiness.

Once school readiness goals are defined, grantees are required to measure children's progress at both the individual child level and programwide. According to OHS, "the purpose for tracking child-level progress is to inform individualized curricular plans and conversations between program staff and parents in an ongoing manner. The purpose of tracking children's progress at the program-wide level is to inform the program's self-assessment and continuous improvement plans to ensure quality" (USDHHS 2013).

Moreover, the act requires the US Department of Health and Human Services to monitor whether grantees are setting and using school readiness goals. The establishment and utilization of school readiness goals is one of seven components on which grantees are evaluated in the Head Start Designation Renewal System. According to Part 1307 of the Head Start Program Performance Standards, released November 9, 2011, all Head Start and Early Head Start agencies must have school readiness goals established as of December 9, 2011.

Although the intentions of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 are to increase Head Start Program quality and in turn improve child school readiness outcomes at kindergarten entry, little empirical information is available about the process used by local programs to define and measure progress toward school readiness goals. Even less is known about how grantees use the data from this process and whether school readiness goal setting is linked with program planning, quality improvement, or boosts in child school readiness. The current study was designed to begin filling these gaps in knowledge by examining the process grantees use to set school readiness goals, to monitor progress toward meeting goals, and to use the resulting data for planning and quality improvement. This project takes a first and necessary step in describing the goals-setting process

before future studies can empirically measure whether goal setting is promoting higher-quality programs and improvements in children's school readiness.

Research Questions

The current study is descriptive in nature and used a mixed-method approach to meet two primary objectives.

The first objective, to examine the process used by local Head Start programs to develop their school readiness goals, was guided by the following research questions:

1. What school readiness goals do Head Start and Early Head Start grantees set?
2. What does the process of setting school readiness goals look like?

The second research objective was to study how local programs use data to track progress toward goals and whether the use of goals and data helps to drive program improvement. This objective was guided by two additional sets of research questions:

3. How do programs use and analyze data to monitor progress toward goals? How do programs report progress on goals?
4. How do grantees use school readiness goals and data to inform program planning and improvement efforts?

These research objectives and questions were addressed by a study design (see chapter 2) that included a telephone survey of program directors and managers, interviews with key staff and stakeholders during follow-up site visits to a subset of the surveyed programs, and interviews with program directors of AIAN grantees. The research design was embedded in a conceptual model that reflects the context in which local Head Start programs operate and the pathways through which the new requirements for establishing school readiness goals can be expected to lead to improvements in program quality and child outcomes.

Conceptual Model

To guide the research, a conceptual model was developed by the research team and was reviewed by Head Start program experts, including federal staff from OHS and national and state T/TA providers.

As shown in figure 1.1, the top half of the model outlines the contextual factors influencing the development of school readiness goals in diverse local settings, and the bottom half depicts a cycle of setting and using school readiness goals to inform program planning.

The bottom half of the model builds on the suggested action steps outlined in the November 8, 2011, Program Instruction, *School Readiness in Programs Serving Preschool Children* (USDHHS 2011b).[4] Grantees are expected to

1. Establish school readiness goals;
2. Develop and implement plans to achieve goals;
3. Evaluate progress toward goals; and
4. Refine or adopt plans for program improvement.

The process is circular as grantees then loop back to the beginning to again consider whether to make refinements in school readiness goals and/or alter action plans for achieving goals.

The process of setting and using goals is complex and iterative. The evaluation of progress can motivate plans for improvement and further plans for action, but it also can feed back into refining goals for school readiness. The conceptual model depicts the steps revolving around the central goals of high program quality and positive child outcomes because the process is not being done for its own sake, but to support these higher-order goals.

As shown in the top half of the conceptual model, the dual and interrelated processes of establishing and using school readiness goals are influenced by the context in which the Head Start or Early Head Start agency operates. Specifically, four key contextual factors are hypothesized to influence the process: (1) Head Start guidance and T/TA, (2) child and family characteristics, (3) program characteristics, and (4) community context. Each of these factors is described below.

FIGURE 1.1

Conceptual Model for School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning
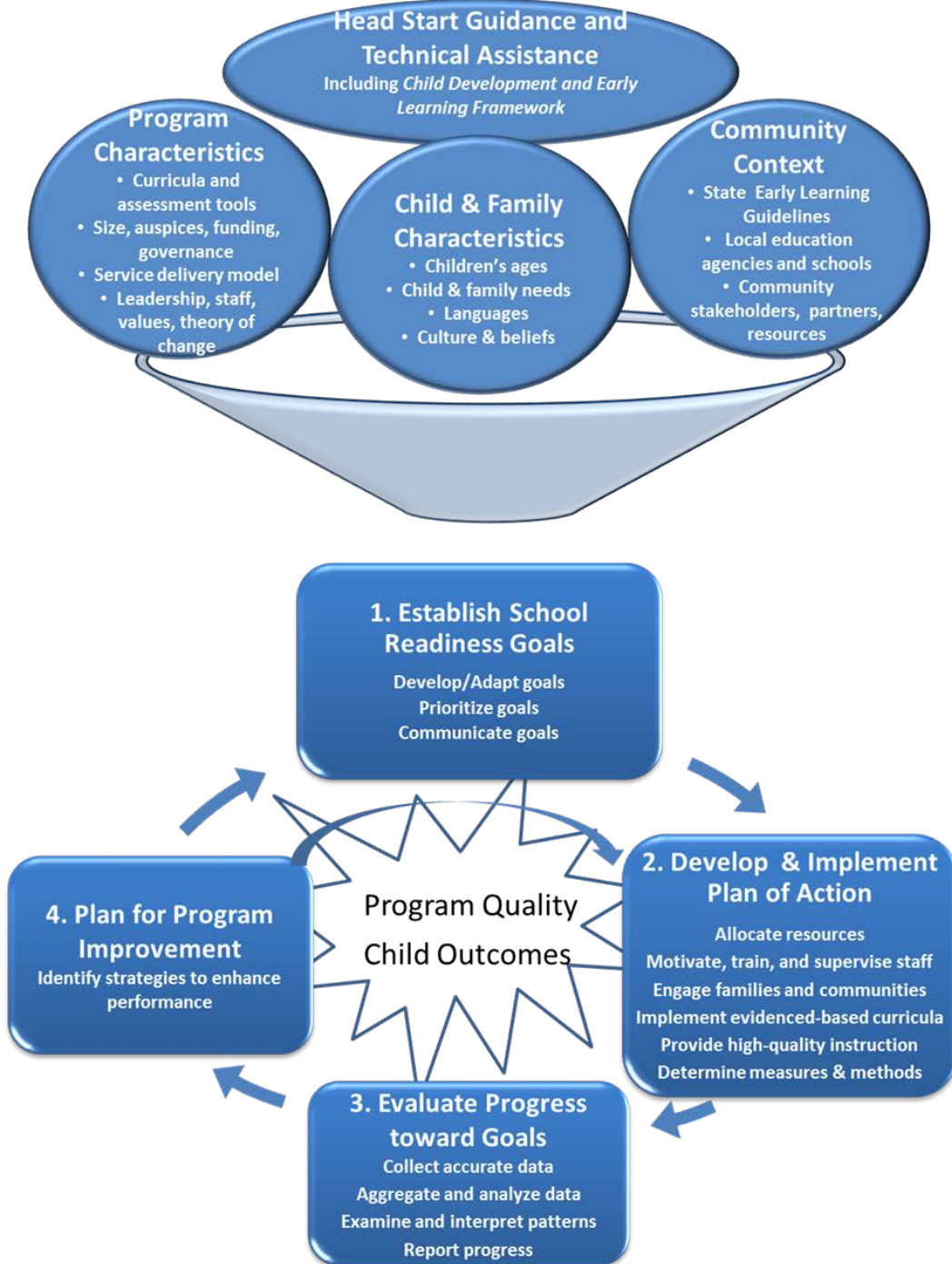
Source: The Urban Institute, 2015.

Head Start Guidance and Technical Assistance

Following the implementation of the School Readiness Act of 2007, OHS provided a number of supports and resources to help grantees better meet the school readiness goals mandate. Of primary importance are Head Start and Early Head Start regulations and standards and the *Framework*, as previously discussed. Other examples of T/TA and resources include an OHS summit, "On the Road to School Readiness," held in Baltimore, MD, in February 2011; the November 2011 Program Instruction referenced above, *School Readiness in Programs Serving Preschool Children* (USDHHS 2011b; and additional documents specific to Early Head Start, such as *School Readiness Action Steps for Infants and Toddlers* (USDHHS 2012b) and *School Readiness Goals for Infants and Toddlers in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs: Examples from the Early Head Start National Research Center* (USDHHS 2012c).

OHS regional staff also telephoned grantees in 2011–12, and again in 2012–13 to check on their progress on setting school readiness goals. The OHS T/TA system, including the National Centers and the network of state T/TA specialists, also provided resources and assistance with helping grantees develop, implement, and use school readiness goals. One of the goals of this study was to hear from grantees about what supports they used (and are currently using) and what additional forms of support would be useful.

Child and Family Characteristics

The requirement to establish school readiness goals applies to Early Head Start grantees serving children from birth to age 3, as well as Head Start grantees serving children ages 3 to 5. Grantees serving children from birth through age 5 are expected to align goals across age groups, but the goals need not necessarily be the same for the different ages. Indeed, age of children served by the programs is one of the contextual factors that is expected to influence the setting of school readiness goals. Other child and family characteristics that may affect school readiness goals include consideration of child and family needs; the presence of dual-language learners; and family culture, beliefs, and expectations.

Program Characteristics

Program structure (including service delivery model, program size, auspices, length of service day, funding streams and levels, and governing structure) varies widely across grantees. These program characteristics are expected to influence the processes of setting goals and using goals. For example, school readiness goals may be different for programs that use a home-based services delivery model as compared to those that use a center-based model, or both. Programs may have preexisting systems of goals and measures, or they may be developing new school readiness goals.

A program's past choices regarding curriculum, assessment tools, and data systems also can strongly influence the selection of school readiness goals and the measures for assessing progress because many curricula have school readiness objectives and tools for assessing those objectives directly built into them. For example, 60 percent of grantees reported using a form of Teaching Strategies GOLD, which is structured around 38 objectives and facilitates periodic observational assessments of how children are meeting these objectives.[5] In some cases, grantees may have assessment tools and data systems that predate their setting of school readiness goals, and these factors influence the process; in other cases, grantees may switch to a new assessment or data system as part of the process of adopting new school readiness goals. The perspectives of program leadership and staff also will be influential and will vary with directors' and staff members' experience, education, capacity and comfort with data use and their participation in professional development and with the organization's overall structure and culture, values, and theory of change.

Community Context

Finally, community context is important. All states have early learning guidelines for children ages 3 to 5, and many states also have guidelines for children from birth to age 3. Grantees are required to align their school readiness goals with their state early learning standards. Thus, state context matters, and it may have a particular influence in states with statewide school readiness assessments. State quality rating and improvement systems may also influence the goal-setting process.

At the community level, kindergarten requirements and expectations and the transition policies of local education agencies and feeder schools may affect the school readiness goals of local grantees, and the process of setting goals and using data to assess progress may be influenced by community stakeholders, partners, and resources, as well as community norms and values.

Organization of the Report

This introductory chapter has provided background on the study and outlined the research objectives and questions and the conceptual model. The next chapter (chapter 2) provides further information on the study design and methods, including the selection process and characteristics of the sample of Head Start grantees who participated in this research. The subsequent four chapters address these key research questions:

- Chapter 3: What school readiness goals do Head Start and Early Head Start grantees set?

- Chapter 4: What does the process of setting school readiness goals look like?

- Chapter 5: How do grantees analyze data and report on progress?

- Chapter 6: How do grantees use school readiness goals and data to inform program planning and practice?

Findings from the telephone survey, fieldwork, review of documents, and case study interviews with AIAN program directors are interwoven in these four chapters. Chapter 7 concludes the report by presenting cross-cutting themes and implications for future T/TA and research efforts. Further methodological details are provided in appendix A; a copy of the telephone survey is provided in appendix B; interview guides are provided in appendix C; and a full tabulation of the results for each telephone survey question is presented in appendix D.

Chapter 2. Methods

This study used a mixed-method approach to address the two research objectives of the study, namely, (1) to examine the process used by local Head Start programs to develop their school readiness goals and (2) to study how local programs use data to track progress toward goals and whether the use of goals and data helps to drive program improvement. The research design for this descriptive study combined a telephone survey of Head Start and Early Head Start program directors and managers with follow-up site visits to a subset of these grantees to examine the school readiness goal-setting process. In addition, researchers conducted in-depth telephone interviews with Head Start program directors and education managers of four American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) grantees. All data collection occurred during the 2013–14 school year: the telephone survey was conducted between October 2013 and January 2014; the site visits were conducted in March through May 2014; and the AIAN interviews were conducted in April through June 2014.

An overview of the sample for each of the three components of data collection is provided in table 2.1. The study team invited 90 grantees to participate in the telephone survey. The response rate was 81 percent, and the final sample size was 73 grantees, including 18 grantees offering Head Start only (HS-only), 14 grantees offering Early Head Start only (EHS-only), and 41 grantees offering both Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS). A subsample of 11 of these grantees participated in site visits, including 5 HS-only and 6 HS/EHS programs. In addition, the research team conducted in-depth telephone interviews with four tribal grantees.[6]

TABLE 2.1

Grantee Sample Composition and Data Collection Methods

Grantee type	Telephone survey	Site visits (subsample of telephone survey)	AIAN interviews
EHS-only	14	0	0
HS-only	18	5	2
HS/EHS	41[a]	6	2
Total	73	11	4

Source: The Urban Institute, 2015.

[a] Half (20) the HS/EHS grantees in the survey sample provided information about the goal-setting process in their Head Start program, and half (21) described the process in their EHS program.

The rest of this chapter describes sampling procedures and characteristics of each of the three study samples (the telephone survey, the site visits, and AIAN interviews), and then describes study

data collection and data analysis for each of the three study components. Further details on the weighting of the telephone survey are provided in appendix A and the instruments for data collection used in this research are included in appendices B and C.

Sampling Procedures and Analytic Sample Characteristics

Telephone Survey

The telephone survey included HS-only, EHS-only, and HS/EHS grantees in operation during the 2011–12 school year. It excluded grantees in the US territories, interim grantees under temporary operation by a national contractor, migrant and seasonal grantees, grantees that delegated all services, and grantees that lost or relinquished their grant as of September 2013.[7] AIAN grantees were excluded from the telephone survey but were included in a separate study component described below. The frame was constructed with Program Information Report (PIR) data made accessible to the study team by the Office of Head Start (OHS).

The objective of this research was to collect information from Head Start and Early Head Start programs on a topic about which relatively little is known due to the new nature of the school readiness goals requirements. The study sought to collect information about the full range of experiences across the diverse set of grantees for the purpose of ensuring that policy, technical assistance, and training are sensitive to differences in grantee operational approaches and populations served. Thus, the primary sampling goal was to ensure the sample would reflect a diverse set of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, with particular attention to diversity in those program characteristics, child and family characteristics, and community context that, as outlined in the conceptual model, are hypothesized to influence the setting and use of school readiness goals.

Therefore, in addition to the three main strata (HS-only, EHS-only, and HS/EHS), the study team identified nine independent categories of program characteristics for consideration in sampling. These categories are defined further in table 2.2 and include

- Program option offered,

- Presence of delegate agencies,

- Program size,

- Grantee organization type,

- Race/ethnicity of children served,

- Language spoken at home among children served,

- Developmental assessment tool used,

- State approach to collection and sharing of data on school readiness, and

- Administration for Children and Families (ACF) region (1–10).

Because the sample size was relatively small and the sampling goal was to guarantee grantees selected for the survey would include a sufficient level of representation within and across each of these characteristics, it was not possible to use a single-stage stratified sampling approach. Instead, the sampling process involved first establishing target sample sizes by grantee type (HS-only, EHS-only, and HS/EHS) for each characteristic. For example, as shown in table 2.2, among the 25 Head Start grantees, the target sample was 20 with only center-based services and 5 with center-based plus other program options; 5 small, 18 medium, and 2 large; 20 without delegates and 5 with delegates, and so forth.

Target sample sizes were roughly based on observed proportions in the PIR data, with certain adjustments, the most notable being a requirement of a minimum of two sample members with a given sampling characteristic and a modest oversampling of grantees with characteristics that were relatively heterogeneous as compared to other characteristics in the same category [e.g., grantees using other assessment tools as compared to grantees using Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD]. For example, among Early Head Start grantees, the target sample was 2 grantees with only center-based services and 13 with other delivery forms, even though only 7 percent of Early Head Start grantees in the universe (or roughly 1 in 15) provided only center-based services.

Once sampling targets were identified, strata representing particular combinations of characteristics were purposively selected to achieve the desired mix of characteristics and then, within those strata, grantees were randomly selected for the study. In addition, the study team selected a backup grantee associated with each grantee selected for the survey, in case the original grantee declined and a replacement was needed. Identifying information (name, address, and so forth) was hidden during sample selection.

This approach differs from a random sample, but because the kind of bias introduced by this approach is not expected to be associated with the outcomes of interest—and because the approach specifically helps ensure the sample includes representation from grantees with a broad spectrum of characteristics—we assumed the approach did not introduce systematic sampling bias, the survey findings were treated as though they came from a random sample, and the report presents results weighted to represent the population of grantees eligible for the study. (Weighting procedures are further discussed below under Analytic Approach and are detailed in appendix A).

As shown in table 2.2, the final unweighted telephone sample was fairly representative of the sampling universe, and the weighted sample resembled the sampling universe even more closely. For example, EHS-only grantees were modestly overrepresented (19 percent of unweighted sample versus 14 percent of the universe), both because the sampling target was elevated to increase the analytic sample size and because the response rate was higher for EHS-only than for HS-only grantees (as discussed below under Recruitment). After weighting, the EHS-only grantees represented 14 percent of the weighted sample. Similarly, so that a greater heterogeneity of assessment tools would be represented among grantees in the sample, there was a modest overrepresentation of grantees that did *not* use TS GOLD or other commonly used assessment tools. This group was 15 percent of the unweighted sample, 11 percent of the weighted sample, and 11 percent of the universe. (For simplicity, table 2.2 presents sample sizes and proportions for the full sample; in fact, the research team set and examined target sample sizes for each of the three primary strata of HS-only, EHS-only, and HS/EHS).

TABLE 2.2
Survey Sample Design and Characteristics

	Target sample (n)	Analytic sample (n)	Analytic sample unweighted (%)	Analytic sample weighted (%)	Universe of grantees[a] (%)
Total	90	73	100	100	100
Program type					
EHS-only	15	14	19	14	14
HS-only	25	18	25	39	39
HS/EHS	50	41	56	47	47
Program option					
Center based only	31	24	33	43	41
Center based plus another option	59	49	67	57	59
Program size					
Small (EHS <75, HS <150)	12	9	12	14	14
Medium (EHS 75–149, HS 150–999)	60	49	67	65	69
Large (EHS >149, HS >999)	18	15	21	21	17

	Target sample (n)	Analytic sample (n)	Analytic sample unweighted (%)	Analytic sample weighted (%)	Universe of grantees[a] (%)
Presence of delegate agencies					
No delegates	78	65	89	92	92
Delegates	12	8	11	8	8
Grantee organization type					
Community-action agency	31	25	34	35	40
Other nonprofit	42	34	47	41	37
School	12	10	14	16	16
Government or for profit	5	4	5	7	7
Race/ethnicity of population served					
High (40%+) Hispanic	26	19	26	25	27
High (40%+) black non-Hispanic	21	17	23	27	24
Low % Hispanic/low % black	43	37	51	49	49
Language of population served					
High (33%+) other primary language	23	18	25	23	24
Low % other primary language	67	55	75	77	76
Child assessment tools[b]					
Creative Curriculum/TS GOLD	45	40	55	60	60
Other commonly used assessments	30	22	30	29	29
Screening or other assessment tools	15	11	15	11	11
State school readiness assessment reported statewide[c]					
Yes	24	20	27	19	18
No	66	53	73	81	82
ACF region					
1	6	6	8	7	6
2	8	6	8	11	9
3	9	7	10	9	11
4	15	12	16	17	18
5	14	9	12	11	17
6	10	8	11	10	14
7	7	7	10	10	6
8	6	5	7	6	7
9	9	7	10	10	7
10	6	6	8	8	5

Source: The Urban Institute, 2015.

[a] Universe is based on grantees reporting PIR data for 2011–12 school year. Universe excludes AIAN, migrant and seasonal, and interim grantees; grantees operating in US territories; and grantees that lost or relinquished grant as of September 2013.

[b] Grantees using multiple assessment tools are coded in the first applicable category. The "other commonly used assessments" category includes grantees using a tool specifically recognized as an assessment tool (as compared to a screening tool) that is used by 50 or more grantees in sampling frame. Assessment tools used by grantees in this category include Child Observation Record/High Scope, CA Desired Results Developmental Profile, Learning Accomplishment Profile (ELAP, LAP3, LAPD, LAPR), Galileo, Ounce, and Work Sampling System.

[c] States with statewide school readiness assessments in at least two developmental domains and reporting results statewide include Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming (Stedron and Berger 2010).

Site Visits

HS-only and HS/EHS grantees that participated in the telephone survey were eligible to be selected for the site visits. Although EHS-only grantees were not selected for site visits, the research team collected information about Early Head Start programs when visiting grantees providing both sets of services. For example, EHS teachers and parents were interviewed separately from HS teachers and parents in order to gather information about the school readiness goals experience for infants and toddlers. Of the total 59 grantees shown in table 2.1 (18 HS-only and 41 HS/EHS), 14 grantees were excluded, including 3 grantees that had not completed the telephone survey at the time the site visit sample was drawn, 2 grantees that did not agree during the telephone survey to be contacted to discuss the possibility of site visit participation, and 9 grantees with an approaching triennial monitoring visit.[8] The remaining eligible sample included 45 grantees.

As shown in table 2.3, the sample of HS-only and HS/EHS programs for the site visits was purposively selected to ensure diversity in program size, geographic location, agency type (nonprofit, community-action agency, or school district), and whether the program provided home-based services. In addition, to ensure the site visit sample included programs with a range of experiences in setting and using school readiness goals (not limited to only programs that experienced challenges or, conversely, only programs that felt comfortable with the requirements), the research team used telephone survey responses to consider the extent to which grantees reported

- Having someone on staff with the title of data or evaluation manager, or something similar;

- Having goals that were easy to set;

- Viewing the goal-setting process as a good use of time;

- Needing more support;

- Having experienced challenges engaging staff in the goal-setting process;

- Having experienced challenges getting enough information about how to meet OHS expectations;

- Having the technology needed to support using school readiness data;

- Having staff who know how to interpret data reports;

- Implementing a school readiness goal-setting process that was primarily led by the Head Start or Early Head Start director; and

- Having involved classroom teachers and parents in the process of deciding on school readiness goals.

Twelve grantees were initially sampled for recruitment, including six HS-only and six HS/EHS programs. As described in more detail in the section on recruitment, if a recruited program refused participation, the site was replaced with another grantee with similar characteristics. In total, the study team contacted 21 grantees to secure the participation of 11 sites, including 5 HS-only sites and 6 HS/EHS sites.

Site Visit Sample Characteristics

	n
Total[a]	11
Program type	
EHS-only	0
HS-only	5
HS/EHS	6
Program option[b]	
Home-based option for either Head Start or Early Head Start	4
No home-based option	6
Program size	
Small (EHS <75, HS <150)	4
Medium (EHS 75–149, HS 150–999)	4
Large (EHS >149, HS >999)	3
Location	
Northeast	3
South	2
Midwest	3
West	3
Agency type	
Nonprofit	6
Community-action agency	3
School	2
Government or for profit	0
Staff dedicated to data or evaluation management	
Reported having someone with title of data or evaluation manager, or similar title	6
Did not report someone with data or evaluation manager, or similar title	5

Source: The Urban Institute, 2015.

Of the 11 programs included in the site visits, 3 were operated by community-action agencies, 6 were operated by other types of nonprofit agencies, and 2 programs were operated as part of the local school system. Size ranged from 50 to 2,500 funded enrollment in the 2012 program year. About half (6 of the 11 sites visited) reported during the telephone survey that they had an individual in the organization whose job title was "data manager, data analyst, evaluation manager or something similar." The sites were carefully selected to achieve geographic diversity across the United States and to ensure that no two sites were located in the same state.[9]

Telephone Interviews with AIAN Grantees

During study design, the research team decided the optimal approach to including AIAN grantees in the study would be to separately conduct qualitative case study telephone interviews with four tribal grantees. The team considered including AIAN grantees in the sample for the telephone survey but decided it would be more valuable to gather in-depth qualitative data on their experiences, especially given that the number that could be included in the sample (four to six grantees) with existing resources would not be sufficient to determine whether their experiences differed from others. These interviews were not expected to capture the full variation in experiences of the population of AIAN grantees across the country. However, they provide new and valuable information regarding the experiences of tribal grantees in meeting the school readiness goals requirements on which future studies can build.

The sampling universe for AIAN grantees generally mirrored the universe for the site visits. That is, it was limited to AIAN grantees that operated HS-only or HS/EHS programs (151 of 209 AIAN grantees) and programs that were run by tribal governments or consortiums (144 of the remaining 151 grantees), offered a center-based program option, and did not have delegate agencies (140 of the remaining 144 grantees). This group of 140 grantees was stratified into two categories based on the size of funded enrollment (greater or less than 150 children) and three categories based on geographic location (Northeast or South, Midwest, and West, as defined by the US Census). With a six-cell (3 × 2) matrix and only four grantees, it was not possible to pick from each cell. Instead, the study team kept the two cells in the West (because this region has the most tribal grantees) and one cell category in each of the two other regions, and then randomly selected two grantees within each of the four

selected cells. One of these two was randomly selected as the primary grantee and the other as a backup in the event that a primary selected grantee was ineligible or refused to participate. After selection, the names of the selected grantees were inspected to verify that the sample contained diversity in tribal affiliations.

The final sample included two grantees serving more than 150 children and two smaller grantees. Categorized by region, it included two grantees from the West, one from the Midwest, and one from the Northeast or South. The study team contacted seven tribal grantees to complete the four interviews.

Measures

Telephone Survey Instrument

The instrument used for the telephone survey (included in appendix B) was designed specifically for this study. The survey included a series of closed-ended questions to gather information from grantees about the process of setting school readiness goals, how the grantee tracks progress toward goals, and how school readiness goals data and related information are used for program improvement. In addition to gathering information about the grantee and the context in which it operates, the telephone survey was designed to obtain information from respondents on

- Overall familiarity with, perspectives on, and opinions regarding the school readiness goals requirements;

- The steps taken to set school readiness goals in the program, including the level of involvement of key stakeholders, resources used to set the goals, and challenges faced throughout the goal-setting process;

- The extent to which grantees are tracking progress toward goals and infusing data and related information into daily operations; and

- Additional challenges faced by the grantee and supports needed to better meet the mandate.

The survey instrument included a skip pattern to customize the protocol so that grantees operating only one program (either Head Start or Early Head Start) would not be asked questions only pertinent to grantees operating both programs. Grantees operating both Head Start and Early Head Start programs were asked to answer specifically for one of their programs; the study team randomly selected half of the grantees serving both age groups to describe the process for their Head Start program and half for their Early Head Start program.

Interview Guides

During the follow-up site visits, the team conducted semistructured individual and small group interviews with various types of respondents to better understand the programs' use of school readiness goals. In each site, respondents included the Head Start program director, the Early Head Start program director or manager (as applicable), the education manager, the data manager (as applicable), up to two other managers or coordinators involved in developing and/or using school readiness goals (e.g., health and nutrition manager, mental health services manager, family and community engagement coordinator, home-based services coordinator), three Head Start teachers or home visitors, three Early Head Start teachers or home visitors (as applicable), one member of the Head Start governing body, three members of the Policy Council, two Head Start parents and two Early Head Start parents (as applicable), and one representative from the local education agency.

The interviews all used protocols with key topics and open-ended questions to allow the interviewers flexibility in adapting the discussion guide to capture key aspects of the process across diverse programs. The research team developed six interview protocols (included in appendix C) tailored to specific respondent groups to guide the on-site discussions. The interview protocols were designed to range from 45 minutes (for parents, members of the Policy Council and governing body, and the local education agency representatives) to 60 minutes (for program managers and frontline staff) and 90 minutes (for the survey respondent and one other program leader—either the director, if not the person surveyed, or another manager closely involved in the goal-setting process).

The research team developed a separate semistructured interview guide for telephone interviews with AIAN program directors. This component of the research took a case study approach, the purpose of which was to gather information about how tribal grantees set and use school readiness goals. The protocol developed for these qualitative telephone interviews (included in appendix C) closely resembled the protocol used for on-site interviews with non-AIAN program directors and was designed to last approximately one hour.

Before finalizing the data collection instruments, the research team pretested the telephone survey with three grantees and the site visit interview guides with one grantee (the AIAN protocol was not pretested). The results of these pretests were used to revise the survey and interview questions and procedures.[10]

Recruitment

Telephone Survey

Letters introducing the study and inviting grantees to participate in the telephone survey were mailed in waves to the 90 sampled grantees beginning in October 2013 and ending in December 2013. During recruitment, three grantees were deemed ineligible to participate and were replaced by three grantees with identical, or nearly identical, characteristics.

About two weeks after each letter was sent, a member of the research team called the director to answer questions, find out if the director would answer the survey or delegate someone else responsible for setting and using school readiness goals to respond, and schedule a time for the telephone survey. The respondent was typically the Head Start or Early Head Start program director or the education services manager or coordinator; when requested by the director, a joint interview was conducted with both the director and the education manager. After confirming participation and scheduling a date and time for the survey, researchers requested copies of the program's school readiness goals and the program's organization chart to review in advance.

Of 90 grantees in the telephone survey sample, 73 completed surveys, representing an overall response rate of 81 percent for this phase of the study. The response rate varied by grantee type: 93 percent for EHS-only grantees, 82 percent for HS/EHS programs, and 72 percent for HS-only grantees.

Although the study team had selected backup grantees that could be used to replace grantees who refused to participate or could not be reached, with the exception of the three that were deemed ineligible for the study, the team decided in January 2014 not to recruit any of these backup grantees, both because the 73 respondents were well arrayed across the characteristics of interest and because significant time and resources had already been spent on recruitment and achievement of the high response rate.

Site Visits

Recruitment for the site visits began in February 2014. The study team sent e-mail invitations to the program directors of the selected grantees and conducted follow-up phone calls to discuss the program's participation in a site visit.

Twelve grantees were initially sampled for recruitment, including six HS-only grantees and six HS/EHS programs. One was withdrawn from the sample due to extenuating circumstances and two directly declined. Others were interested but had trouble scheduling site visits, a challenge that increased as the spring progressed (and some programs were ending the school year early due to sequestration or cuts in funding). As programs refused, replacement sites were selected to reflect as many of the same characteristics as the original site as possible.

In total, the study team contacted 21 grantees to secure the participation of 11 grantees, for a response rate of 52 percent. The 10 refusals included 6 HS-only and 4 HS/EHS programs. The main reason for refusal was a lack of time in the spring months as grantees were completing end-of-the-year program activities or had other upcoming site visits. Several grantees cited other reasons such as sudden changes in program management and staff turnover that impeded the program in hosting a visit. The final sample included five HS-only grantees (one fewer than the sampling goal in the original study design) and six HS/EHS grantees.

After confirming the grantee's participation, the site visit team worked with the program director to design the site visit schedule, identifying specific individuals to represent each of the desired respondent groups. Program directors were asked to recruit parents willing to be interviewed. If possible, parents were to be selected with children in different classrooms, unless the program only had one classroom. Program directors also arranged for Policy Council members and governing body representatives to be interviewed. In some cases, directors contacted representatives from the local education agency to invite their participation; in other cases, directors provided those names for the researchers to contact.

Telephone Interviews with AIAN Grantees

Recruitment and data collection for the four AIAN grantees occurred between February and June 2014 and followed the same procedures and protocol used to recruit non-AIAN grantees for telephone surveys. After sending a letter introducing the study, the research team contacted tribal Head Start program directors to discuss their participation in the study and schedule an hour-long

interview. Seven AIAN grantees were contacted to recruit four programs to participate in an interview. One of the three nonparticipating grantees refused outright, one grantee scheduled but was not available at the time of the interview and did not respond to follow-up inquiries, and one grantee did not respond to any of the e-mails or phone calls.

Data Collection Procedures

Telephone Survey

The 73 telephone surveys were conducted between October 2013 and January 2014. The median survey length was 48 minutes with a range between 28 and 102 minutes. About 20 percent of grantees involved more than one person in responding to the survey questions. Most often, survey respondents were Head Start or Early Head Start program directors or education coordinators or managers, but a handful of respondents were staff in different positions who had responsibility for setting or using school readiness goals.

To facilitate data collection, the survey protocol was programmed into Checkbox, an online survey application that in this case was only accessible to members of the research team. The application prompted interviewers through the protocol and also served as the mechanism by which telephone interviewers recorded responses to both closed-ended and open-ended survey items. As a token of appreciation, $25 was offered to each grantee for participation in the survey. Individuals participating in the survey were also mailed a thank you letter.

Site Visits

Site visits were performed by teams of two Urban Institute researchers between March and May 2014. Visits to HS-only grantees were designed to last 1 ½ days and consisted of 8 to 10 separate one-on-one or group interviews; to allow extra time on site to capture perspectives from both Early Head Start and Head Start staff and parents, site visits at HS/EHS grantees lasted two full days and included 11 to 14 interviews. The actual number of interviews varied depending on the structure of the program and respondent availability. Phone interviews were conducted in the event that the study

team could not meet with an interviewee while on site. This situation occurred for several local education agency representatives and governing body members.

While on site, one researcher conducted each interview while another took detailed notes on a laptop computer. To encourage the respondents to speak freely and openly, interviews took place in a quiet location such as an office or an empty conference room whenever possible. When they were readily available, the research team collected secondary documents from each program, such as data reports illustrating how the program shares information on school readiness goals and progress with staff, parents, governing bodies, and other stakeholders. Interviews, particularly with managers and teachers, provided an opportunity for respondents to review and explain these documents in more detail. With the consent of the interviewee, most interviews were audio recorded.

Parent interviews were conducted on site at convenient times for the parents' schedules, such as early in the morning (during child drop-off) or in the afternoon (during child pick-up). All parent interviews were conducted in either English or Spanish, depending on the preferred language of the interviewee. As a token of appreciation, $25 was offered to each parent for participation in the interview.

Telephone Interviews with AIAN Grantees

The four telephone interviews with AIAN programs were conducted between April and June 2014. After scheduling an interview date, a researcher led an open-ended conversation with program directors and/or their designees, guided by the specific AIAN discussion guide described above. Another researcher took detailed notes during the interviews, which were not recorded. Often the director preferred to participate in the survey with the program's education manager or another individual in a similar management role. Interview respondents included three program directors, four education managers, and one fiscal director. Following the interview, $25 was offered to each grantee for participating in the study, and the research team sent a letter to each participant thanking them for their participation.

Analytic Approach

Telephone Survey

After exporting the raw survey data from the Checkbox application into Stata Data Analysis and Statistical Software, analysis of the telephone data began by cleaning, formatting, and applying raking weights to the dataset of closed-ended survey responses. The research team ran descriptive analyses of all survey items (looking initially at variation across grant type only) to pull out key themes and trends in order to inform more detailed analyses of subgroups consistent with the sampling parameters. Subgroup analyses included looking at variation by program type asked about in the survey and, for selected analyses, by program size.

Analysis of the open-ended questions from the survey proceeded as a separate process, which included a review of all responses to a given question in order to identify key themes, coding of responses according to the themes, and a second review of the coding to ensure that all themes were addressed and appropriately coded. Whenever possible, "other specify" responses to otherwise closed-ended survey questions were recoded into existing response categories or collapsed into new categories for reporting.

Responses to the telephone survey were weighted as described in appendix A. In brief, the research team applied what may be called poststratification weights, adjusting the sample so that it better matched the universe in terms of grantee type (EHS-only, HS-only, or HS/EHS), program option (center based only or center based plus some other option), program size, presence of delegates, organizational type (community-action agency, other nonprofit, school, government, or for profit), language of population served, assessment tools (Creative Curriculum/TS GOLD, other commonly used assessments, other screenings or less commonly used assessments), and whether the state conducts and reports statewide kindergarten readiness assessments.

Site Visits

Interview notes from each site visit were cleaned (or transcribed from recordings if necessary), labeled by site and respondent type, and uploaded to NVivo qualitative research software. The research team developed a coding scheme that closely aligned with the study research questions and subquestions in order to identify key themes across the 11 sites. A research analyst coded each interview in NVivo

following the coding scheme by assigning codes to selected sections of text. Example codes were "challenges setting goals" and "supports grantees' need to follow mandate." Once all interviews were coded for content, an analyst reviewed all text coded to a particular code and identified common themes as well as differences in responses across specific respondent groups. For example, program directors' and managers' comments about how goals were useful to their programs were analyzed separately from what teachers said about the same topic.

Finally, the research team reviewed and analyzed the written school readiness goals of each of the 11 sites visited. During recruitment, grantees were asked to send a copy of their school readiness goals, if they were willing to do so. The goal of this analysis was to identify similarities and differences in the types of goals that programs set.

Chapter 3. What School Readiness Goals Do Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees Set?

Prior to this study, little information existed regarding Head Start grantees' written school readiness goals. As a foundational step to this exploratory study, the research team collected documentation of school readiness goals from the 11 grantees that participated in a site visit and conducted a content analysis of those documents. This chapter presents the findings from the document review, bolstered by interview data from program leaders and staff in the 11 sites. Specifically, the chapter describes what the goals look like (with selected examples), alignment of the goals with the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* (the *Framework*), the number of goals grantees set, and prioritization of goals. Although the school readiness goals described in this chapter are not representative of all Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, they demonstrate some of the range in written goals developed by grantees.

What Do the Goals Look Like?

The format and specificity of goals vary widely. Among the 11 sets of goals reviewed, no two were exactly the same. Each emphasized particular areas and tailored goals to their own population, resources, and programmatic approach. In addition, the format of the goals documents varied considerably, ranging from a pamphlet designed for community and parent outreach to complex documents that contained extensive cross-walks between the goals, local district standards, state standards, the *Framework,* and outcome measures.

Four of the 11 grantees developed simplified documents that listed the goals by domain, with little or no additional information. For example, the language and literacy goal in one document was simply, "Children will make growth in Language and Literacy objectives. They will also improve their skills in vocabulary, alliteration, and rhyming." In the school readiness goals document designed as a pamphlet to be handed out to parents, detail on the goals was kept to a minimum to increase accessibility. (Additional information about how this program measures progress toward goals was obtained through the program's annual report.) More generally, for these four programs the "school

readiness goals" were conceptualized as the goals within domains, with documentation of learning standards and measures organized separately in other documents (see figure 3.1, example 1).

The remaining seven grantees provided more comprehensive documents describing their goals and corresponding objectives, with some information on how they would measure progress toward their goals. All seven listed the assessment tools used to measure the goals and/or the curriculum used for the domain. Typically, they listed both the name of the tool [e.g., Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD, BRIGANCE, or Development Indicators for the Assessment of Learning] and the item number within the assessment tied to the goal. For example, one program set the following goal in the domain of language and literacy:

> The child will understand verbal communication and conversations during exploration and functional play routines as well as during direct assessments appropriate for his or her chronological or developmental age. Measurement Protocols: TS 8a, TS 10a, TS 18a

Here, "TS" refers to Teaching Strategies, and the number-letter combination indicates the particular item used as a measure of this goal. In examples such as this one, the goals document delineates what measures will be used to assess progress toward the goals (see also figure 3.1, example 2).

Four of the 11 visited programs sent a document that **explicitly mapped their own goals with early learning guidelines** or standards recommended or required by the state, the local school district, or both. That is, their goals document was presented in tabular form, with program goals in one column aligned with state and/or local early learning guidelines or standards in other columns, as shown in figure 3.1, examples 3 and 4.[11] The matching was not necessarily one-to-one, and the programs sometimes articulated more complex goals than the state or local guidelines. One program, for example, had literacy goals that could be only loosely mapped against those of the state. In other cases in which standards, curriculum, and assessments were previously aligned, the goal-setting process appeared easier for grantees. As one program director said, "It helped that TS GOLD aligned with the state goals already."

FIGURE 3.1

Selected Examples of Goals Related to Language Development and Literacy

Example 1. School readiness goal by domain

Language development and literacy	Infants and toddlers will demonstrate and express age-appropriate language and literacy skills for use in their home language.

Example 2. School readiness goal with identified measure

The child will follow verbal directions during exploration and functional play routines as well as during direct assessments appropriate for his or her chronological or developmental age. *Measurement Protocols: TS 8b.*

Example 3. School readiness goal with identified measures and benchmark aligned with state standard

Framework domain	Goal	State standard	Target outcome	Measurement source
Language and literacy	**Phonological Awareness begins around (48) months of age** **Younger Preschoolers** Children will show awareness to language through songs, rhymes and words. **Older Preschoolers** Children will show awareness that language can be broken into words, syllables, and smaller pieces of sound.	Domain: Language and Literacy Dimension: Reading Subdimension: Phonological Awareness	*Note: The document specifies a percentage of children that will show specified developmental gains.*	Assessment Tool: XXXXX Domain: Language and Literacy Measure: XX

Example 4. School readiness goal aligned with the Framework, assessment, and state standards

School readiness goal	*Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*	TS objectives for development and learning	State standards
Children will engage in conversation and increase vocabulary knowledge	<u>Language</u> **Receptive Language** The ability to comprehend or understand language Attends to language during conversations, songs, stories, or other learning experiences Comprehends increasingly complex and varied vocabulary Comprehends different forms of language, such as questions or exclamations Comprehends different grammatical structures or rules for using language	<u>Language</u> 8. Listens to and understands increasingly complex language a. Comprehends language b. Follows directions 9. Uses language to express thoughts and needs a. Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary b. Speaks clearly c. Uses conventional grammar d. Tells about another time or place	<u>Domain: Communication, Language, & Literacy</u> Note: The goals document lists specific state standards such as "asks questions" or "initiates conversations"

Source: The Urban Institute, 2015, drawing from school readiness goals documents provided by grantees in the site visit sample.
Note: Many programs provided more than one language and literacy goal. Identifying details have been removed and some language has been edited to avoid disclosing the identity of participating grantees.

Few programs explicitly set quantitative benchmarks defining progress. Two programs included benchmarks defining progress targets for the school readiness goals.[12] These benchmarks were defined as a percentage of the children meeting particular developmental gains or results. For instance, one program set the goal that "65–70% of children will show one developmental gain by the end of each program year," applicable to all goals. The other program set the goal that "90% of children fall within their 'color-band'" (i.e., their age-level expectation) or "'meets program expectation' by the end of the program year," again applicable across all goals.[13] As discussed in further detail in chapter 4, some grantees were unclear whether they needed to set benchmarks and what benchmark would be most appropriate. Some felt that their target should be 100 percent, but they were concerned about setting a benchmark in writing that was not realistic—or, conversely, setting a benchmark that was too low and insufficient as a goal.

How Closely Do Programs Align Goals with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework?

The *Framework* provided the starting point for all grantees to set school readiness goals. As noted in the introduction, the *Framework* identifies 10 domains across five broad dimensions; an eleventh domain applies to children who are dual-language learners. The 11 domains are expanded to include specific elements within each domain; 37 domain elements are identified.

Some grantees followed the *Framework* very closely. Four grantees structured their school readiness goals based on all 37 domain elements identified in the *Framework*; no additional goals were included. Five grantees developed one or more goals for each of the five broad dimensions in the *Framework* (e.g., physical development and health), but these goals did not align with the 37 domain elements of the *Framework*. One grantee used a combination of approaches: the broad dimensions for four of its goals, and the more specific domains within cognition and general knowledge (e.g., mathematics knowledge and skills, science knowledge and skills, and creative arts expression) for its additional goals. The remaining grantee added a family and community engagement goal and selected goals to match the 37 domain elements of the *Framework*.

How Many Goals Do Grantees Set?

The number of goals set by the grantees ranged from 5 to 37 goals. As mentioned, four programs wrote a goal for each of the 37 domain elements from the *Framework*. Two grantees had only five goals, based on the five broad dimensions in the *Framework*; however, multiple objectives or subgoals were tied to each goal.

During the site visits, some managers explained that they were still struggling to determine how many goals to set. For example, a data manager told the research team, "We found out during the last training that 15 goals are too many. The other agencies [have] 5 or 6."

Program size did not appear to be correlated with the number of goals set or any other goal-setting design or approach. Nor was there an observed pattern in goals by whether the program was Head Start only or operated both Head Start and Early Head Start programs. In fact, the grantee that set only one goal per domain was a combined program. Specifically, two of the six grantees offering both Head Start and Early Head Start had separate written documents, one with goals for Head Start and the other with goals for Early Head Start; three grantees had separate goals for Head Start and Early Head Start but written within the same plan; and one grantee had the same goals for all children from birth through age 5. Although these 11 sites are not representative of all Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, this sample of school readiness goals highlights the variation in approaches taken.

Do Grantees Prioritize Their Goals and, If So, How?

Prioritization is not evident in the goals documents. According to program directors, there was some initial confusion about setting the goals and what they had to cover and prioritize. Some directors were not sure there needed to be goals for all developmental domains; one program drafted their initial goals to focus solely on areas in which they felt the program had the greatest needs, such as social-emotional development. However, after receiving feedback from regional representatives and state technical assistance specialists, the grantees developed goals to align with the five broad early learning dimensions in the *Framework*. As a result, no direct prioritization is apparent in the written goals documents; all goals are mentioned and given equal weight.

Interview data provided mixed evidence about prioritization of goals. Respondents generally agreed that all of the goals were important, and thus that all were covered in the program. As one program director said, "I don't think there's any one area more important than another one." The education

manager at the same program highlighted this point, saying "I think we do a decent job at implementing them all . . . we cover every domain." Yet some respondents felt that, in practice, some goals were prioritized more than others. Certain goals were prioritized at different times of the year, for example, as grantees offered professional development and training that focused on a particular goal, and among different children depending on individual needs.

At one program, the director said teachers prioritized in the classroom based on their students: "I think the classrooms emphasize some of them more than others—just by looking at what they have in the classroom." In another program, there was an emphasis on skills viewed as critical by local kindergartens. As a teacher said,

> We aim for what is needed for kindergarten—those are what we work on mostly. For example, the counting, letters, socialization, following directions, self-help, fine motor, gross motor would be the ones for kindergarten. Versus how many sentences do they speak, number of words . . . just nothing I would be concerned about, these are things that I wouldn't worry about otherwise that take up a lot of time.

In other programs, some respondents said all domains were priorities, yet other respondents shared what they perceived as priorities in the program or at least in their center or classroom. Literacy was cited as a priority by at least some respondents in several programs. In one program this emphasis was due to low assessment scores in language and literacy the previous year; in another program language and literacy were seen as areas of need for the community more broadly, due to high rates of functional illiteracy.

Social-emotional skills were also mentioned as a priority. In most of these cases, the priority came from a sense that social-emotional skills are critical for success in kindergarten, and that children entering kindergarten without social-emotional skills will quickly fall behind. As one manager explained:

> One of the things that came out of that is that they [kindergarten teachers] really wanted us to focus on the social-emotional, so the kids knew how to interact with adults and peers, have the persistence to stick with tasks and not getting frustrated. And the sense we got from them, was if we could teach those skills, which are life skills, then the rest is just stuff, and the kindergarten teachers can teach that, but if they can't hold a conversation, if they can't stay focused, then they have to start at that point.

There was also the sense from some teachers that behavior problems among students were increasing, and that prioritizing social-emotional skills was necessary to prepare these children for kindergarten. One teacher explained, "I think behaviors over the year are a lot worse," and a director at another program said,

Social and emotional and behavior has been critical—it's not just our program. Behavior has been an increasing problem. It hinges on the emotional development. You have to look at that because if you have a child that a teacher cannot control or modify the behavior of, it changes everything. Every year we're spending more and more resources in child behavior techniques.

Mathematics was mentioned as a priority by a smaller number of respondents, again due to low assessment scores the previous year. Finally, several respondents in one program mentioned physical health and development as a priority, due to community needs for greater health and wellness services. The health manager at the program explained, "If a child has bad dental or is sick a lot, that child will not be a good learner."

Again, these priorities were mentioned by some respondents, and although they suggest somewhat higher emphasis on certain goals in some programs, the general view was that all goals across all five broad dimensions are important.

Chapter 4. What Does the Process of Setting School Readiness Goals Look Like?

A primary motivation for this research was to better understand the process through which Head Start grantees set their school readiness goals. The telephone survey captured key information about who led the goal-setting process; the level of involvement of program staff, parents, and other stakeholders; resources used to facilitate writing the goals; and particular challenges that grantees may have encountered. The site visits explored this process in depth by gathering information on the steps grantees took to write their goals, the supports they used, and the challenges they faced. This chapter presents the findings from the telephone survey, site visits, and interviews with American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) program directors; interviews with the latter are summarized in a text box at the end of the chapter.

When Did Grantees Set School Readiness Goals?

Legislation, regulation, and guidance issued by the Office of Head Start (OHS) all shaped the timeline according to which grantees set their school readiness goals. As noted in chapter 1, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 required grantees to establish program goals for improving the school readiness of children participating in the program.[14] The proposed rule, published in September 2010, added detail to the legislative requirement and placed it in the context of the new Designation Renewal System. The final rule—which refined and further clarified the school readiness goals requirements—was published in November 2011, effective December 9, 2011.[15] OHS issued guidance in the form of a program instruction in November 2011 that offered additional information to help grantees comply with the school readiness goals requirements of the 2007 Head Start Act.[16] OHS further supported grantees in meeting the new requirements through their training and technical assistance (T/TA) systems and through a focus on this topic as part of the grant management activities carried out by Head Start program specialists and managers in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) regional offices.

The survey found that **most grantees first established their school readiness goals between September 2010 and August 2012**. Relatively few grantees (6 percent) reported establishing school readiness goals in response to the pending mandate (before the proposed rule was published by ACF in September 2010) (see appendix D, table 1). A large number of grantees (40 percent) reported establishing school readiness goals between October 2010 and December 2011 (between publication of the proposed and final rules). An additional 31 percent of grantees established school readiness goals between January 2012 and August 2012 (in the eight months after the final rule became effective). Most of the remainder (approximately 19 percent) reported setting school readiness goals during the 2012–13 academic year (September 2012 to August 2013), with 4 percent setting them in September 2013 and less than 2 percent still in the process of setting their goals at the time of the survey in fall 2013 and winter 2014.

The data suggest Early Head Start-only (EHS-only) and Head Start-only (HS-only) grantees had slightly different patterns in the timing of initial goals setting (see figure 4.1).[17] In particular, it appears EHS-only grantees were less likely than other grantees to have set their goals by December 2011 (23 percent compared to 49 percent). Also, EHS-only grantees established goals at a very high rate between January and August 2012 so that by August 2012, 84 percent of these grantees had established goals. In contrast, although about half (49 percent) of HS-only grantees had set goals by December 2011, relatively few set goals between January and August 2012. Consequently it appears that, compared to EHS-only and combined Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS) programs, a larger subset of HS-only grantees established their goals after August 2012 (33 percent compared to 16 percent).

According to site visit data, most interview respondents reported becoming aware of the school readiness goals requirements in 2011, two academic years prior to data collection for this study. Program directors and education managers learned about the requirements through various channels, including national conferences, training events, and conference calls with Head Start program specialists in ACF regional offices. Once aware of the mandate, program management typically informed staff of the new requirements during staff meetings and updated the Policy Council and governing body members during their regularly scheduled meetings. Because of staff turnover, not everyone interviewed for this study was affiliated with Head Start when information about the requirements was first released. This was also true of parents, Policy Council members, and governing board members, many of whom came to Head Start after adoption of the goals had occurred.

FIGURE 4.1

Date by Which Grantees Initially Set School Readiness Goals by Grantee Type
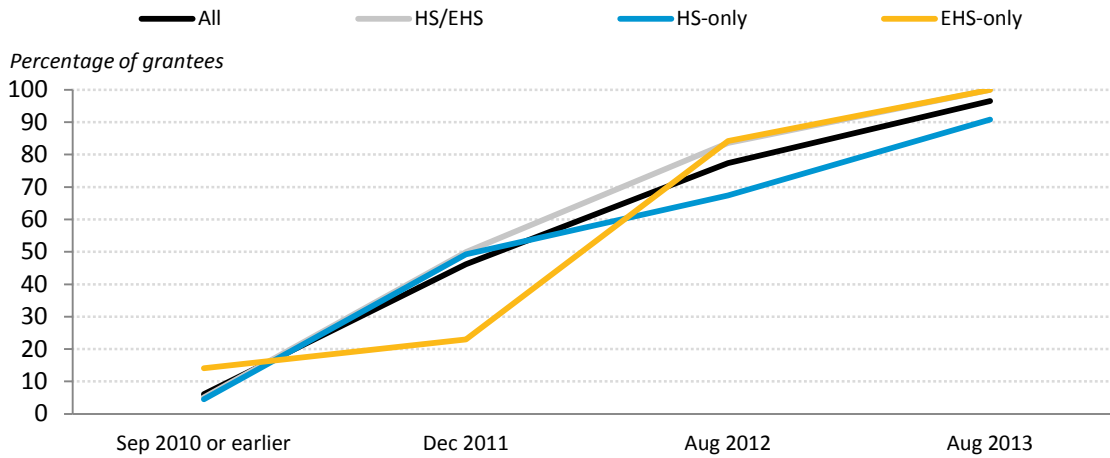
Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question B3 (see appendix D, table 1).

How Did Grantees Approach the Process of Setting School Readiness Goals?

More than half the grantees (55 percent) started the process of setting school readiness goals from the ground up, according to the telephone survey. However, one-third (33 percent) of grantees modified goals already in place, and 12 percent modified goals from another source. Survey data suggest that EHS-only grantees may have been less likely than HS-only grantees to modify goals already in place (21 percent compared to 44 percent); this finding is tentative due to small sample sizes.

For grantees operating both Head Start and Early Head Start, the telephone survey included questions about the similarity of the goal-setting process and goals across the two programs. About two-thirds of HS/EHS grantees (67 percent) reported using one goal-setting process for both programs, and about one-third (34 percent) reported having separate processes (see appendix D, table 3). Sixty percent of HS/EHS grantees said the goals for the two programs were "largely the same" rather than "largely different."

Education Managers and Program Directors Played Lead Roles

The survey asked who led the goal-setting process in terms of who was responsible for providing overall direction and supervision and who was responsible for managing the day-to day work of setting the goals. Across all grantees, **program directors were most often responsible for providing overall direction and supervision, and education managers were most often responsible for managing the actual work of setting the goals** (see figure 4.2). When the education coordinator or manager provided overall direction, she or he was usually also responsible for the day-to-day work of setting the goals. About one-third of program directors who provided overall direction for the process were also responsible for the day-to-day work. The data suggest there may be some differences by program type. In 42 percent of EHS-only grantees, program directors managed the day-to-day work of setting the goals; they played this role in in only 9 percent of HS-only grantees and in only 21 percent of HS/EHS grantees (see appendix D, table 2).

Leadership for the Goal-Setting Process

Who was responsible for *overall direction and supervision* of the goal-setting process?

Who was responsible for *managing the day-to-day work* of setting the goals?
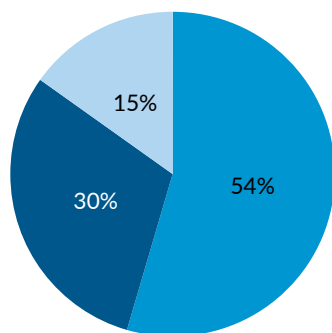
- ■ Program director/ assistant director
- ■ Education manager
- ■ Other
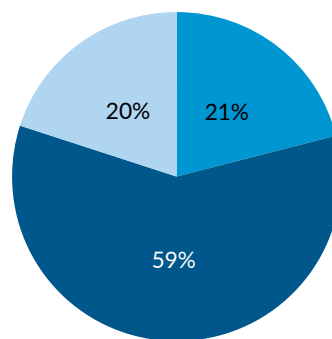
Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions B7 and B8 (see appendix D, table 2).

Although program directors and education coordinators usually led the goal-setting process and thus were extremely involved in deciding on goals, survey results show **grantees also involved a range of staff and stakeholders in their decisionmaking**. Many others—including other managers, classroom

staff, center directors, Head Start parents, and Policy Council members—had a moderate to high level of involvement in deciding on goals (see figure 4.3). Although commonly involved as well, other groups of staff and external stakeholders—including home visitors and family service workers, governing boards, local education agencies, community partners, and external consultants—were somewhat less likely to be involved in deciding on goals. When the latter groups were involved, on average they had a lower level of involvement than others.

Site visit data show similar patterns. Across the 11 sites, the process was led by five program directors, five education managers, and one assessments manager. (In one small grantee, the director was also the education manager.) The decision about who would lead the process generally depended on staff roles and responsibilities in the program, availability, and expertise. Across all sites, other individuals were also involved in the process to some extent.

FIGURE 4.3

Average Involvement of Staff and Stakeholders in the Goal-Setting Process

Average across grantees, as reported by program directors or their designee

Category	Value
Education coordinators or managers	4.7
Program directors and assistant directors	4.5
Classroom staff	3.7
Center directors or site managers	3.6
Other coordinators or managers	3.5
Policy Council	3.4
Family service coordinators or managers	3.4
Parents	3.3
Home visitors	2.9
Local education agencies or schools	2.9
Family service workers	2.7
Governing body or board of directors	2.6
Community partners	2.4
External consultants	2.3
Directors of multipurpose organizations	2.3

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question B10, a–n (see appendix D, table 4).
Note: Ratings use a 1–5 scale on which 1 = not at all involved, 5 = very heavily involved.

Most Grantees Formed Special Committees to Help with the Goal-Setting Process

According to the survey, most grantees (89 percent) established a "special committee to help with the school readiness goal-setting process" (see appendix D, table 2). These committees—which the grantees visited called by names such as "school readiness committee," "education committee," and "education task force"—included a range of staff and stakeholders. Survey data indicate that when grantees formed a special committee, it almost always included staff at the manager or coordinator level. Specifically, 92 percent of grantees included managers and/or coordinators on the committee. Head Start and Early Head Start program directors and/or assistant directors were on the committee in about 74 percent of grantees, classroom staff and/or home visitors in 81 percent of grantees, and parents in 70 percent of grantees. A substantial number of, but fewer, grantees included representation from local education agencies (41 percent), the Policy Council (34 percent), center directors (33 percent), and community stakeholders (31 percent) on their school readiness goals committee. It was less common for committees to include someone from the organization's governing body (22 percent), family service workers (12 percent), or other program staff (13 percent). In some cases, grantees included professors from local colleges (14 percent) and external consultants (8 percent).

The site visit data provide additional information about the responsibilities of these special committees. In some cases, these committees were directly involved in setting the goals; in other cases they gathered to review and approve written goals. They periodically convened to review data on progress toward goals. For example, one program used a collaborative process, convening its school readiness committee several times during the year when the program first developed school readiness goals. As a group, the committee reviewed child outcome data and discussed areas in which children were low and improvements should be made. The director, assistant director, and education manager then drafted the goals, each working on a separate section, and shared drafts with the committee for feedback. Now that its goals are in place, that committee meets semiannually (midway through and at the end of the program year) to look at progress toward goals and adjust the goals as needed to shift their focus.

Approaches to Collaboration Varied

Interviews during site visits also provided more information about how program directors and education services managers worked with other staff and stakeholders to set school readiness goals. The interviews suggest programs have different general approaches when writing their school

readiness goals. These approaches, described below, can be characterized as management driven, collaborative teams, high levels of parent involvement, and TA driven.

In the **management-driven approach,** the director, education manager, or other designated lead wrote the goals and, in some cases, asked one or more other staff for feedback. For example, in one small program administered by a local school district, the director (who also served as education services coordinator and disabilities coordinator) led the process of writing the goals with assistance from the family and community partnership coordinator, who supervised the Early Head Start home-based services and brought that perspective. They reported not having formal meetings with other staff and stakeholders but informally talked to different people to get input into their school readiness plan, including one kindergarten teacher, the leaders of the Policy Council, a school board member, and a mental health counselor at the school.

The **collaborative teams approach** was much more collective and involved teams of staff who gathered together to review resources, plan their course of action, and discuss potential goals. They often divided the effort to draft the written goal statements. For example, in one large grantee agency operating multiple centers, the education manager facilitated the process, but the effort was collaborative across centers. First, the education manager gathered research on school readiness and guidance from OHS on how the goals should be developed. She shared the information with center managers, who then worked with teachers and family advocates at their individual centers to come up with ideas for goals based on the needs of their center. The groups started with many ideas and narrowed the list to the ones that best represented all children served across the agency. The program updates the goals every year based on input from teachers and new parents.

In some programs **parents were largely involved** from the beginning of the process. For example, in one large grantee, the education manger organized cluster meetings at which groups of parents from multiple local centers gathered with lead teachers from their centers to discuss the school readiness goals they had for their children. Separate meetings were held for Head Start and Early Head Start. The education manager gathered the input from parents and as a group they reviewed the goals and discussed developmentally appropriate expectations and the foundational skills needed to achieve the ultimate goals parents wanted, such as name writing and tying shoes. The education team took parents' input and finalized the goals to align with state standards and their assessment tool.

Although many grantees reported that the state T/TA specialists working under contract to OHS were valuable resources during the goal-setting process (discussed in the next section on supports received), in a small number of programs, the goal-setting process appeared to be largely **TA driven**. In

those cases, T/TA specialists played a large role in facilitating the writing of goals. For example, in one small, rural program, the state T/TA specialist coordinated a meeting that joined grantees from across the state. Together grantees discussed OHS expectations, reviewed resources, and developed a set of goals they could adopt or modify for their individual programs. The assessments manager and education manager then met to map out which items from their assessment tool [Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD] they could use to measure each of their goals.

In general, there was more staff buy-in when more individuals were involved in the process and goals were set as a result of a team effort rather than by a single person.

Most Grantees Had Formal Processes for Approving Goals and Sharing Information about Goals with Staff

The survey asked grantees whether they had a formal process for approving the goals and, if so, who provided formal approval. Nearly all grantees (98 percent) had a formal process for approving the goals (see appendix D, table 3). Among grantees with a formal approval process, 99 percent had the Policy Council approve the goals, and 77 percent had the organization's governing body approve the goals. Head Start/Early Head Start program directors formally approved the goals in about 15 percent of grantees. Among grantees that were part of a multiservice organization, only 8 percent had the goal approved by the director of the multiservice organization. A handful of grantees had the goals approved by their Education Advisory Committee (4 percent), their school readiness goals committee (3 percent), the ACF regional office (6 percent), or another individual or group (3 percent).

In addition, most programs (84 percent) reported using formal training on goals, often combined with informal information sharing, to spread information about goals with program staff. Only 17 percent reported relying solely on informal information sharing (see appendix D, table 6).

What Resources Did Grantees Consult When Setting Goals?

The Framework and State Early Learning Standards

Both the survey and site visit interviews asked grantees about external resources consulted in the process of setting school readiness goals. Grantees most often started with the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* (the *Framework*), state early learning standards, and their curriculum and assessment tools. Some grantees also mentioned referring to the Common Core standards. These materials gave grantees concrete ideas for the structure and content of their goals and supported grantees as they worked to develop school readiness goals that were in alignment with OHS, state, and (in some cases) local school expectations. As one survey participant explained, "We used the *Framework*, and because [our assessment tool] is so aligned with the *Framework*, we were able to align the data so perfectly that it was easy to determine where we needed to set our goals." As noted in chapter 3, some grantees followed the *Framework* very closely, establishing goals in each of its 37 elements.

Assessment Tools and Curriculum

As they developed school readiness goals, grantees were cognizant that they had to measure progress toward the goals and would need to identify measures to collect these data.

Site visit interviews suggested that, in most cases, grantees were already using at least one comprehensive assessment tool at the time of the mandate and continued using it, although sometimes with an upgraded (e.g., online) version. In addition, a few grantees selected new tools in response to the goals mandate. Of the 11 sites visited, 7 used TS GOLD as their primary assessment tool, supplemented by additional assessment tools. The four other programs visited used a combination of different primary assessments, including AimsWeb, BRIGANCE, the Ounce Scale, the Work Sampling System, and California's Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). Among the broader sampling frame for the telephone survey, more than half (60 percent) used Teaching Strategies GOLD/Creative Curriculum. Another 29 percent relied on other "commonly used" assessments, including the Child Observation Record (COR)/High Scope, California's Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), the Learning Accomplishment Profile, the Galileo Assessment Scales,

the Ounce Scale, and/or the Work Sampling System. A minority (11 percent) did not use any of these common assessments but instead relied on screening tools (e.g., Ages and Stages Questionnaire) or less common assessment tools.[18]

Grantees that had a comprehensive assessment tool often used it a resource for both measures and goals (as described in chapter 5). The comprehensive assessment tools are explicitly designed to measure child development or developmental outcomes in infant and preschool populations. Many are already aligned with state early learning standards and/or the *Framework* and are often marketed directly to Head Start centers, advertising that they help such centers meet the goals mandate. Training is offered, both online and through conferences and training sessions. The assessments can be administered either on paper or, in most cases, electronically through purchased software. The software versions also allow users to produce reports by child or by group or group characteristic. Several are also matched with curricula; TS GOLD, for instance, is designed especially to measure outcomes associated with the Creative Curriculum.

During site visits and in the telephone survey, **grantees reported reviewing their assessment tools as they developed their goals** to identify specific skills and behaviors they could reliably track with data already being collected. Many staff described going through a mapping exercise to essentially narrow their draft list of goals to those they could measure with their existing assessment tools.

In some cases, staff used data from assessment tools to identify areas with low assessment scores and adopted those objectives or indicators among their goals. Thus, the assessment tools played a large role in shaping the goals that were selected. One survey respondent described it this way:

> The most useful [resource in setting goals] was the Teaching Strategies GOLD. That is the key. Out of everything, that tells us [the most about how] the children are doing. Without that data, we wouldn't be able to determine what are our weaknesses in terms of supporting children's development. When you look at the data, it represents our teachers and their skills . . . but [also answers] the question, "How can we enhance our program to better meet developmental goals?"

In another example, when asked an open-ended question about the most important consideration when setting goals, one survey respondent said it was their curriculum and assessment tool, "since no matter what, everything has to be tied to our curriculum and assessment tools."

Other National Resources

Other important resources included OHS guidance on the goals requirements; Information Memoranda from OHS were specifically mentioned by 13 of the 73 survey grantees in response to an open-ended question on the telephone survey. Site visit and telephone survey respondents also mentioned materials from ACF's online Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC), Head Start's National T/TA Centers, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). A few grantees mentioned attending webinars and national training conferences, which they found to be helpful sources of information.

Local Education Agencies

Several grantees participating in the site visits and in the survey sought input from their local school districts regarding expectations for incoming kindergarteners. In a handful of cases, Head Start program staff met with kindergarten teachers to learn directly the types of behaviors and skills the teachers thought were important. Some programs conducted a survey of local kindergarten teachers to learn about their expectations. The education manager for one program described how they used the survey data in combination with other resources:

> When we first got the kindergarten survey . . . most of the things that the teachers had expressed they really wanted were social-emotional, so most of our goals were under the social-emotional category or the approaches to learning. And then when Head Start explained further they wanted a goal in each domain, then we spread it out, and we looked at the [*Framework*] and selected a goal for each, and talked about how we would measure it.

Regional Offices and State T/TA Specialists

When asked what helped move along the goal-setting process, several program directors and managers mentioned **support received from ACF regional offices and state T/TA specialists** operating under contract to OHS. They described regular conference calls with their T/TA person[19] and in-person meetings or trainings—sometimes with other grantees—to review OHS guidance and discuss draft goals. A few grantees learned the details of the goals requirements from their T/TA specialists, who shared materials from training sessions they attended. As one director described, "She and I e-mailed and called regularly. She basically gave me some guidelines and told me this is what other Head Start programs are using." A few of the grantees participating in the survey noted that regional Head Start program specialists played a similarly helpful role as they were developing goals.

Other kinds of resources were mentioned less frequently. A couple of grantees participating in the survey indicated they did their own research, and a couple described relying heavily on external consultants for support. Finally, a few grantees visited and several surveyed found peer support very useful, gathering with other grantees in their area to discuss the mandate and share ideas about goals and even copies of the goals they set.

During site visits, respondents reported drawing on a variety of different resources. When asked what resources were most useful when setting goals, one director replied,

> The NCQTL [National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning] resources—the *Framework* and house model. ECLKC had a whole designated area for school readiness. The webinars were very helpful. Our regional specialist was very helpful and the most supportive of our process because we're so close to our regional office so they could come down and do hands-on support. We're lucky our state preschool director has a very strong Head Start and ECE [early childhood education] background so she could give a lot of guidance.

What Were Additional Considerations When Setting Goals?

In addition to consulting various national, state, and local resources, the 11 field work grantees—and many surveyed grantees—reported looking at their **child assessment data from the previous year**, or multiple years if available, to determine which areas were in need of improvement. In addition to child assessment data, a few programs examined other program data when setting their goals. Specifically, grantees mentioned looking at data from child health records, attendance records, community needs assessments, family engagement activities, and classroom quality assessments (i.e., scores on Environmental Rating Scales and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System or CLASS).

Grantees participating in the survey also mentioned other considerations as most important in affecting the goals they chose. Beyond looking at assessment data to align goals with observed needs, some survey participants also **considered whether goals were developmentally and age appropriate**, both overall and for children with particular characteristics such as being dual-language learners, having special needs, or homeless. A handful of survey respondents specifically indicated they wanted goals that reflected research-based best practice. Another important consideration for many grantees was ensuring that the goals aligned with both state and OHS expectations. Grantees also described wanting to make sure the goals reflected the expectations of parents or the local community.

In some cases, survey respondents also emphasized the importance of goals being **relevant to teachers, feasible for teachers** to implement, and **achievable**. As one survey participant explained, "Our consideration was that they were realistic and helpful and meaningful and that it wasn't just something that we do and put on the shelf, but that it be a living document." Another noted her most important consideration was "making sure that [the goals] were definitely teacher friendly and that teachers understood and would have a clear understanding of what they were expected to do." One surveyed grantee pointed out that this was an especially important consideration for Early Head Start:

> It's a particular struggle with Early Head Start because the requirements for staff for Early Head Start are not as stringent. So many teachers at the most have two-year degrees. You're asking a lot of someone who doesn't have the experience of a four-year degree teacher. They may be great with babies, but in terms of articulating and understanding broadly what you're trying to get them to think about, it's a learning curve.

What Are Grantees' Plans for Revising School Readiness Goals?

Grantees Planned to Regularly Revise Goals

According to the survey data, just over two-thirds (68 percent) of grantees thought they would revisit or revise their school readiness goals every year. Just under one-quarter (23 percent) thought they would revisit the goals for revision every few years, and just under one-tenth (9 percent) thought they would revisit and make necessary revisions throughout the course of each year (see appendix D, table 6). A similar pattern emerged from the site visit interviews; most grantees described their goals as a living document they planned to revisit, revise, and/or update to reflect changes in their focus over time. Some felt their goals were broad enough they could make small tweaks to the language (rather than rewriting all the goals), but others anticipated revisiting their goals on a regular basis and making changes to goals based on changing program needs.

Grantees Had Several Motivations for Revising Goals

Survey respondents described a range of motivations for regularly revisiting the goals. In general, most grantees talked about wanting to **ensure that the goals continued to reflect the needs of the children and families** and that they were effectively supporting the program in meeting those needs. Some

grantees discussed revisiting the goals to "wordsmith" so the goals would resonate better with parents, updating some goals to better match with available data, adding goals for more subpopulations such as dual-language learners, or separating goals for 2-year olds from goals for infants and toddlers. Grantees also described revisiting the goals for the purpose of ensuring they maintain alignment with new or revised state early learning guidelines.

Many grantees talked about **using data when revisiting and revising their goals.** For example, grantees responding to the survey were using baseline assessment data, and in some cases community data, to refine goals for the year and to set priorities. They used assessment data from the prior year to identify strengths and shortcomings. For goals not met in the prior year, grantees talked about considering whether the goals were developmentally appropriate, adding more goals in that domain to improve the information available to diagnose the problem behind not reaching the goal, and planning for additional professional development and parent support around the goal. Some grantees also talked about using suggestions provided by parents, staff, and community stakeholders as part of the process of revisiting their goals.

The site visit data provide additional insights into the types of considerations grantees contemplated as they thought about revising their goals. Most commonly, staff discussed **whether they should revise goals each year, or if their program's school readiness goals should be broader to assure applicability to each cohort of children.** For example, one director pointed out that if her program set new goals after baseline fall data were collected and aggregated, it could be spring before the goals were written, formally approved, and shared with field staff. A new cohort of children start each year, so the goals based on child outcome data for one cohort do not necessarily apply to another. For that reason, the director and her school readiness committee were considering making broader goals that did not need to be revised year to year:

> We're going to really move towards looking at broader goals that are more consistent across a few years. It gets confusing about what we want the staff and teachers to be able to focus on and articulate. If we keep changing it, it gets fragmented. We decided this year we're going to narrow down our goals and make them align with our strategic plan and align with the professional development and be very intentional about how we'll coach and train our staff for better child outcomes. If we do that I think we'll see better success.

Similarly, an education manager in a different program discussed the challenge of implementing an action plan and examining progress over time if the goals changed from year to year. Her program decided to keep the same set of goals for a few years:

> That [decision] came out of a conversation with [our] T/TA. [She] thought that if we did only one year we weren't devoting all of what we could devote to it. She suggested a three-year cycle where the goal process is reviewed every third year.

What Challenges Were Faced When Setting School Readiness Goals?

Grantees Reported Challenges in Finding Time for the Process and in Engaging Parents

According to the telephone survey, **nearly three-fourths (74 percent) of grantees felt that finding time for the school readiness goal-setting process was a big or medium challenge** (see figure 4.4). A similar percentage (74 percent) of grantees reported that engaging parents in the process of setting goals was a big or medium challenge. Engaging program staff in the process of setting goals was not as challenging: although over half (57 percent) reported this was a big or medium challenge, nearly one-third (32 percent) did not consider it a challenge at all.

FIGURE 4.4

Grantee Views on Possible Challenges in the Goal-Setting Process
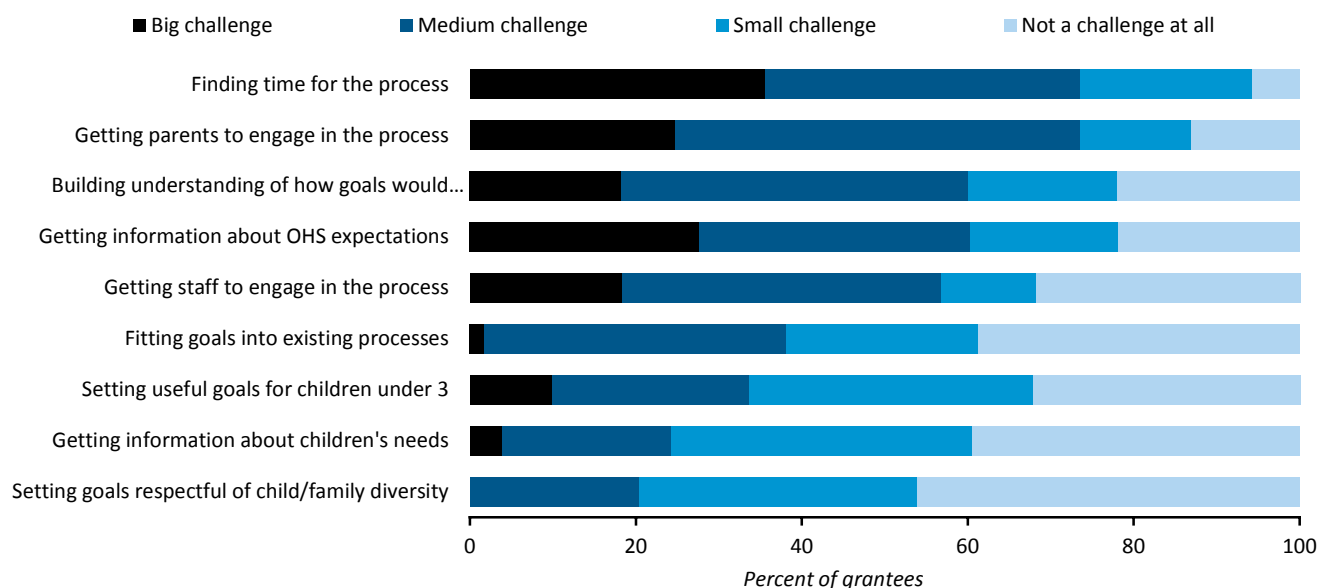
Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question B19, a–i (see appendix D, table 8).

Although finding time was challenging, **a large majority of grantees (84 percent) nevertheless reported that setting school readiness goals was a good use of time** (see appendix D, table 7b). And, despite the challenges in engaging parents and program staff, most programs did engage them. For example, only 18 percent of grantees reported that parents had little to no involvement in deciding on school readiness goals, and only 13 percent reported classroom staff had little to no involvement in the decisionmaking on goals (see appendix D, table 5).

Grantees Wanted Clearer Expectations of How Goals Should Appear

More than half (60 percent) of the grantees reported that **getting enough information from OHS about how to meet the school readiness goals requirements** was a big or medium challenge (see figure 4.4). This concern was also raised in a number of site visit interviews. For example, grantees described they were (and in some cases still are) unclear on OHS expectations for how the goals should appear, how many goals were needed, how detailed the goal statements should be, and whether grantees have to set benchmarks or specific percentages for the progress they expect to achieve.

Several grantees said it would have been helpful to have had **more specific guidance in advance.** Over time more information became available, but it was often too late to be of initial assistance. A few grantee representatives mentioned how they wished OHS had piloted the mandate and conducted an implementation study to work out any issues before rolling it out nationally. They also mentioned how some T/TA specialists did not have the answers they needed or would not tell them the right way to do things but rather only point out what was wrong:

> It was frustrating when we put stuff together and [TA specialist] said, "No, you're leaving this out" instead of . . . saying what they want and asking us what the best way is to get that information from us. Can you give us a model or sample?

During the visits, some grantees reported having access to little guidance and investing a significant amount of time in trying to understand the requirements, reviewing resources, and writing and rewriting goals. They often realized late in the process that they had too many goals and too big a plan, and then had to narrow the focus. One program director serving both Head Start and Early Head Start described her experience this way:

> For our service area, we're serving [many] LEAs [local education agencies]. Well, what LEA 1 has is different than what LEA 18 has. . . . We were too detailed. We thought we had to have it down to every expectation of what a kindergartener had to have when they hit school. And to do that from 8 weeks old. . . . It took us a year and a half or more before we finally realized we're too deep.

Another director described how the process of setting goals became very complex as her program attempted to apply all that they learned while aligning with state standards and the curriculum:

> When the *Framework* came out and everyone was told, "You need to align the *Framework* with early learning goals, and if you have state performance standards, get those lined up with it and line it up with your curriculum." We jumped straight into the huge project. The Head Start training network . . . initiated that. It was millions of meetings. We went from complex to simple so people can understand it rather than going the logical way, simple to complex.

To deal with this issue of lengthy goals, some grantees created a school readiness plan that was comprehensive and aligned with standards and measures and an abbreviated version (sometimes a brochure) for parents and external stakeholders:

> We started with something that was so big and now we're trying to condense it so it's parent and teacher friendly. The document we created was just huge with our implementation plan. You can't give that to a parent. We've been talking school readiness with the teachers at meetings, but to make that document readable to everyone, that was difficult. We started difficult and went to easy. It took a while.

Although the research team heard a number of suggestions for how OHS could have provided more direction in advance, grantees expressed mixed opinions when directly asked whether they could have had more support in setting school readiness goals: only 34 percent agreed they could have had more support, 22 percent were neutral, and 44 percent disagreed (see appendix D, table 7b). Furthermore, 66 percent of grantees said they "had the information they needed" to support the school readiness process (see appendix D, table 7a).

Some Grantees Questioned the Necessity for Writing Out School Readiness Goals

Building understanding for how school readiness goals would help their programs was noted as a big or medium challenge for more than half (60 percent) of grantees (as shown in figure 4.4). In site visit interviews, program directors and managers reported that they themselves were confused about **why they had to write school readiness goals when their curriculum and assessment tool already laid out clear goals and objectives** for them. Because programs were already collecting data on an array of skills based on their assessment tools, they found it somewhat strange to only report on a subset of those measures to meet the goals mandate. As one education manager stated,

> We have goals. We have the *Framework*. You have your assessment tools, you have your curriculum, and those have goals. Why do you need us to reinvent the wheel when it's already there? Then there are state standards and core curriculum standards. When I showed all of that stuff to my head teaching team, I said, "We need to look through this and figure out what are school readiness goals." They were deer in a head light. I wasn't really clear on what exactly it

was that OHS wanted, except we're to take this stuff and make goals. I couldn't help them. We just started reading things and trying to educate ourselves for what end result we weren't sure. I still quite honestly don't get why I have to rewrite them [each year]. I see how you need to emphasize some more than others depending on your population and outcomes. But to really rewrite a whole document is silly.

Another director felt that her program was following the key requirements of the mandate already and was confused as to why the mandate was necessary:

We didn't just start doing it, we've been doing it. It's a matter of putting it on paper . . . to say what we were doing and to form a school readiness committee so we meet physically a few times a year. But I guess I wasn't sure why they wanted to see [the written goals]. Transparency? It was never answered. It was just kind of thrown. . . . You never knew what was expected—that was the biggest thing. The guidance along with the expectations weren't clear when it first came out.

Early Head Start and Home-Based Programs Reported More Challenges

Setting goals appeared to be somewhat more challenging for EHS-only and HS/EHS grantees than for HS-only grantees. Eighty-three percent of HS-only grantees agreed they had the information they needed to set goals, but only 54 percent of EHS-only and 55 percent of HS/EHS grantees agreed with this statement (see appendix D, table 7a). Site visit respondents further explained that **guidance for Early Head Start was released after the Head Start guidance** so they were uncertain about whether they were required to have separate goals, an integrated set of goals broken down by age level, or broad goal statements that could apply to all children of all ages. One grantee revised their goals several times, eventually deciding on an approach that would better measure progress by each age group served:

The first time we did it we just had general goals. Then we broke it up by age groups because we realized it would be easier to track if we were breaking it down more.

Grantees like this one determined it would be more beneficial to specify goals by age group (e.g., younger infants, older infants, toddlers, 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds). Although some grantees wrote broad goals for children of all ages, others found it easier to write goals that were targeted to the developmental needs of each age group. Moreover, some grantees had different assessment tools for infants and toddlers than for preschoolers, and found it easier to write separate goals, drawing on the separate assessment tools.

Similarly, **grantees operating different service options**—center-based, home-based, and family child care—**had more difficulty establishing goals** that could be implemented and monitored across settings.

Part of the difficulty was that home-based staff worked with individual families that they visited once a week and not a group of children whom they instructed daily. Although home visitors collected data on children's development and planned activities to facilitate growth in targeted areas, their work was much more individualized and focused on the intermediate goal of supporting the parent. These staff had to make a cognitive shift to see the value of incorporating the program's school readiness goals for all children into their planning with individual children and families. They also had to make the distinction between the program's school readiness goals, children's individual education plans that their parents set for them at the beginning of services, and the family goals set by the parent. An EHS manager who supervised home visitors described the challenge of thinking specifically in terms of school readiness goals:

> It's been difficult to focus on "this is school readiness goals" versus "this is assessments goals/IEP [individual education plan] goals," "this is socialization goals," "this is family goals." The difficult part is to merge everything together so it's not like, "What are these goals?" I know the first time I started talking about the goals with the team, they said, "We already do this— what is the difference between these goals and the [individual learning plan] goals?" It's a matter of merging it and seeing as a big picture.

Some Grantees Were Challenged by Integrating School Readiness Goals with Other Program Goals

Program staff mentioned how they had other program goals beyond school readiness goals, such as their parent, family, and community engagement goals and program improvement goals that targeted classroom quality and other components of their services. Some staff felt these goals should be integrated so their efforts would not be siloed. In particular, they felt **school readiness goals should extend beyond measuring child outcomes to consider the "bigger picture" role of parents, families, and the community,** and how they could better prepare children for school. A family and community engagement coordinator shared the following statement:

> Last summer when the parent, family, and community engagement framework came out . . . I took the lead in studying and understanding it; now we are moving that into school readiness. We are expanding goals so the community and families have goals, too, to support child [outcomes]. As opposed to each of us making a document—it didn't make sense when the outcome is the same.

Although pulling together those pieces and essentially merging goals for children's school readiness with goals for parent, family, and community engagement is challenging, programs embraced this approach.

Another manager also described her program's effort to create an integrated set of goals that reflected both the child outcomes framework and the parent, family, and community engagement framework:

> I think it has to do with the fact that [the frameworks] were too fragmented. We needed to make sure there was intentional integration. We knew that to make this successful there had to be a strong parent focus and strong parent goals. We knew that we weren't seeing the progress we wanted to see from the professional development we were doing—we knew integration had to happen. We couldn't just say school readiness was the goal we wanted the children to have; we needed to get the children ready through the parents.

Some Grantees Were Concerned about Setting Comprehensive School Readiness Goals That Focus on the Whole Child

Some staff—particularly those in specialized areas—expressed concern that their program's school readiness goals did not account for everything they should. They felt there was a limited focus on the child outcomes that could be more easily measured and tracked over time with the program's primary assessment tool.

For example, a health and nutrition coordinator explained her concern over the high rate of obesity in her program and how she is starting to track body mass index, but this outcome is not reflected in the program's school readiness plan, which only includes fine motor skills under the physical development domain:

> Hygiene is hard to measure, because it's really subjective. Two minutes of teeth brushing isn't subjective, but what counts as brushing? Nutrition is almost impossible to measure, because it changes day to day, and we don't see what they eat at home. Gross motor—we can measure if they can perform the activities, do they engage in activity for an hour a day, but we can't measure whether their heart rate gets up. That's probably why we don't measure it.

Moreover, certain staff expressed concern that the school readiness goals requirements might cause Head Start to shift its focus away from child and family well-being and toward child academic outcomes. Even though the *Framework* includes developmental domains beyond cognitive skills—such as physical health, social-emotional development, and approaches to learning—the increased emphasis on assessment worried them. They felt strongly that the school readiness goals should not be limited in scope but rather address the needs of the whole child.

Some Grantees Were Challenged by Setting Goals during a Time of Transition

Some grantees struggled with meeting the school readiness goals requirements while simultaneously adjusting to changes. A large number of grantees had recently shifted to a new assessment tool (62 percent of grantees improved technology as a result of the mandate, as discussed in chapter 5). They felt overwhelmed knowing they were required to report on child outcome data using a new tool on which they were still training staff and data systems in which they were still ironing out implementation kinks. A few mentioned not having access to archived data from previous cohorts, so limited data were available to make decisions about goals.

Grantees were dealing with staffing changes as a result of the new teacher education requirement.[21] Many were affected by sequestration and temporary funding cuts.[22] Program managers mentioned getting pushback from staff, such as, "We have to change something else?" and "This is more work for us." It took some time for staff to recognize they were already doing much of what was required and how the new goals requirement could be useful to them.

A Look at AIAN Grantees: What Does the Process of Setting School Readiness Goals Look Like?

All four American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) grantees interviewed for this study used existing goals or outcomes as a starting point when establishing their school readiness goals. In all four cases, grantees were also building on the developmental objectives specified in their child assessment tools and sought to align those objectives with the *Framework* and state early learning guidelines. Two of the four grantees operated Head Start and Early Head Start programs; both established a common set of school readiness goals across Head Start and Early Head Start, accompanied by a set of age-specific objectives.

Staff and stakeholders involved. Like grantees in the main study, the interviewed AIAN grantees took different approaches to the work of setting their goals, ranging from a heavily management-driven approach (with input from others at various points) to a more collaborative approach involving management, frontline staff, and parents. To obtain parent input, one grantee administered a parent survey to identify priorities; another relied on parent feedback via the Policy Council. One grantee established a formal school readiness goals committee consisting of parents, management, and frontline staff and also worked with their educational disability advisory committee when setting goals. All four grantees took the goals to Policy Council for approval. In terms of the role of tribal government in setting goals, interview respondents generally indicated they informed their tribal government about the requirements and their program's school readiness goals. However, except in one case in which a representative from the Tribal Council sat on committees whose responsibilities included setting or approving the goals, it appears tribal governments did not play a direct role in defining the school readiness goals.

Cultural and linguistic considerations. In some cases, interview respondents discussed the

intersection of the school readiness goals requirements with their efforts to implement culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum, instruction, and other services. Based on input from parents and tribal leaders, two programs highlighted the importance of integrating culture-specific objectives into their school readiness plans. One of these sites described "rolling" activities and concepts related to their culture into lesson plans by, for example, thinking about tribal activities (e.g., hunting, gathering, fishing) taking place in different seasons, and integrating concepts from those activities into work on math skills, discussions about animals, and so forth.

External supports and resources. Only one interviewed AIAN grantee reported integrating input from local kindergarten teachers as they initially set goals. Another grantee reported turning to ACF's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) and the National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning.

Three of the four grantees said support from the Region XI training and technical assistance (T/TA) center was useful; two found the support extremely useful. One grantee explained, "Having a new perspective from someone who has seen other goals . . . really helped us progress to where we are now." These grantees relied on the T/TA center for general guidance; assistance writing a school readiness goals plan; and help aligning their goals across the *Framework*, state early learning guidelines, and the program's curriculum and assessment. One grantee hosted the T/TA center for a workshop (focused on both goal setting and measuring and reporting progress toward goals) attended by all staff. But because the workshop occurred after the grantee had set goals, they said,

> We found it useful but late. They could have answered more questions [if they had done the workshop] at the beginning. We were trying so hard at the beginning to see if we were in compliance.

The fourth AIAN grantee participating in the study did not seek T/TA from the Region XI center when setting their goals and instead primarily relied on peer support networks such as a local Head Start Association and a group of tribal and nontribal Head Start programs in their region. Although the grantee said they were now "fortunate" to have good access to T/TA support, they explained that before the Region XI T/TA contract was awarded to a new organization in 2012, it was a cumbersome, lengthy process to place a T/TA request, that OHS "struggled to have adequate T/TA providers on task" and that it was "sketchy as far as who it was and what they could do" for AIAN grantees.

Challenges. When initially responding to the school readiness goals mandate, AIAN grantees interviewed for this study faced many of the same challenges that non-AIAN programs confronted. Two of the four felt the new requirements were like other OHS "mandates and initiatives that get pushed out of the government that we have limited information on. . . . We seem to get . . . little support around it and spend a lot of time trying to find the process they envision for the final product." One of these grantees ultimately felt the goals were useful, but the other expressed ongoing uncertainty about whether some of what they were doing was "overkill." This grantee was particularly overwhelmed by the amount of work involved in tracking children's outcomes.

Grantees cited some additional challenges as they were setting their goals. One explained they "struggled to solicit parent involvement," saying it "is always something we try to do but may get sparingly depending on the content and how comfortable they are giving time to the activity." This grantee also described a challenge helping Early Head Start parents and staff make a conceptual shift to defining goals for infants and toddlers more comprehensively and in terms of school readiness. Another grantee said they were initially "lost" when thinking about how to align

curriculum and assessment with the *Framework*, state early learning guidelines, and local objectives and approaches. But with assistance from the T/TA center and working through their lesson plans subject by subject, it was eventually easier to see how the program could "be creative" and combine all the ideas.

Chapter 5. How Do Grantees Analyze Data and Report Progress?

The Head Start school readiness goals mandate requires grantees not only to set goals, but also to **use data on school readiness to evaluate their progress.** To that end grantees must analyze individual and aggregate child assessment data at least three times a year [45 CFR § 1307.3(b)(2)(i)].[23] To understand how grantees approached the use of data, the researchers asked grantees in the telephone survey and in site visits about the measures or assessment tools used to measure progress toward goals, how they collect and track data, how they analyze and interpret information from assessments, and how this information is reported to parents, the governing board, and community stakeholders. This chapter reviews findings on these topics from the survey and site visits, and a text box at the end of the chapter discusses findings from interviews with American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) grantees.

How Do Grantees Measure Progress toward School Readiness Goals?

Grantees Reported Few Challenges in Selecting Measures for Goals

A first step toward evaluating progress toward school readiness goals is to specify progress measures related to each goal. Most grantees (86 percent) reported having measures for all goals, and the remaining 14 percent had measures for most goals (none of the 73 survey respondents reported having measures for only some or none of the goals) (see appendix D, table 9). **Three-fourths of the grantees said it was no challenge (45 percent) or a small challenge (31 percent) to find measures to align with their goals**; only 11 percent reported it was a big challenge (see appendix D, table 14).

Grantees Drew Measures from Their Comprehensive Assessment Tools

The use of comprehensive assessment tools, and the fact some grantees used assessments to drive the choice of goals, may explain why so many grantees found it easy to identify measures for all goals. As noted in chapter 4, most grantees that participated in a site visit were already using a

comprehensive child assessment tool or were in the process of transitioning to one at the time of setting their school readiness goals. Grantees generally described the process of selecting measures to assess progress toward goals as involving a mapping of their goals against the items in their primary child assessment tool. **In many cases, school readiness goals closely matched some or all of the specific developmental objectives captured in the assessment tool.** For example, a program with a social-emotional goal of children building positive relationships with adults and peers might look at their assessment tool for items that could measure that goal. If such an item were found, the program might adjust the language of the goal to align it as closely as possible with the measure. As one program manager said,

> [TS GOLD] has 38 measures and we look at all of them. We . . . track everything, but for the goals we track about half of them. The measures came from the curriculum.

Grantees in the site visits typically did not look for new measures to use as a replacement or supplement to the measures in their primary tool. Because of the cost and burden associated with changing assessment tools and data systems, grantees generally felt they had to use the measures in their existing tools.

Multiple Factors Drove Selection of Assessment Tools

The choice of assessment or assessments was driven by multiple factors, according to staff interviewed on site. In some cases, **grantees used an assessment tool required by external funders or partners,** such as state education agencies. For example, one grantee visited by the research team was required to use a certain tool because it participated in a state prekindergarten program, and another grantee used systems compatible with the local school system. In other cases, cost of technology featured heavily in the decisionmaking process. As one director put it,

> It's expensive. Fortunately, we've been able to afford most of the data. We're still going through the expensive process of upgrading the computers and hardware. Even the software is expensive.

The availability of assessments in different technological formats—online and on paper—also influenced the choice of assessment, as **programs sought tools that could match their level of technical knowledge and resources**. The desire to consolidate assessments and data tracking appeared to push some programs toward Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD, which was perceived by some programs as more complete in its coverage of different domains, although supplements were often still employed. Finally, the choice of assessment was also influenced by a sort of path dependence; all programs

visited had used some type of data to measure child progress in the past, and many chose to continue working with that same tool after the advent of the goals mandate.

Lines Were Blurred between Assessment Tools and School Readiness Goals

During conversations with staff during the site visits, it appeared that **some staff made little distinction between the developmental objectives in their assessment tools and the school readiness goals adopted by their program** (sometimes a subset of the objectives). They used the term "school readiness goals" broadly to refer to either the full array of developmental outcomes measured by their assessment, the set of formally adopted goals, or even the individual education goals set for each child.

In some cases, the implementation of the school readiness goals mandate coincided with the rollout of new assessments and data systems, in particular, the TS GOLD online system. Those changes, and not necessarily the school readiness goals requirements, resulted in a major shift in staff practice:

> The old assessment tool—it wasn't data driven. I think bringing [TS GOLD] to us made people rethink what they were doing, and they were more thoughtful about what they were doing. And I know assessment has more meaning. Even online compared to paper copy brings more meaning and purpose to what they're doing. Although it's a struggle, it's worth it to get data like that and outcomes like that.

The in-depth interviews suggest that grantees using online assessment tools to support data management and analysis faced fewer challenges in identifying school readiness goal measures. They were able to more easily pull up data reports to identify the skills and behaviors they wanted to target and the measures they would use to track progress.

What Is Grantees' Capacity for Collecting and Analyzing School Readiness Data?

Fieldwork suggested that teachers and home visitors held the main responsibility for collecting child assessment data, with other staff such as services managers responsible for collecting and maintaining data on attendance, health, and other measures. Most commonly, **school readiness goals data collection entailed documenting observations of all students in each goal domain**. The ways in which these observations were made and their frequency varied. All teachers were encouraged to conduct observations daily, but managers acknowledged that not all teachers had the time. The format of the

teachers' documentation ranged from sticky notes to notebooks to tablets, when the technology was available. Teachers using paper for observations typically had an extra step involved in data collection, as daily or weekly they had to transfer paper notes to computers and upload to assessment software or give the notes to someone responsible for data entry. Programs also collected student work and kept portfolios, particularly if they were using the Work Sampling System.

A Minority of Grantees Reported Shortages in Staff or Technology

Most grantees reported sufficient capacity to manage, collect, and analyze school readiness data, according to the telephone survey. **Three-fourths (75 percent) of grantees agreed with the statement that they have the technology needed to manage and analyze data,** and only one-fifth (21 percent) agreed that they did not have enough staff to collect needed data (see figure 5.1). Smaller numbers, but still a majority (65 percent) agreed that their staff were knowledgeable about *collecting* valid, reliable data. The same view held true in site visit interviews. Several respondents mentioned the availability of interreliability training and testing on child assessments; teachers found this training useful given the complexity of the tools, and some even felt that a refresher course would be helpful. Where such training was not standard, respondents were more concerned about the reliability and quality of the data. One local education agency representative expressed her concern about the data when school readiness goals were first implemented:

> Data [are] only as good as the training people have had. There has been discussion of having all pre-k providers [in the district] going through the reliability training. It would be a step up in confidence.

Respondents were mixed in terms of their confidence in the ability of staff to interpret data reports. **Only one-third (34 percent) of the grantees agreed that staff were knowledgeable about interpreting data reports**, and over half (53 percent) neither agreed nor disagreed that staff had sufficient knowledge for interpreting school readiness data (see appendix D, table 12).

The school readiness goals requirements led many grantees (62 percent) to make improvements in their technological infrastructure (see appendix D, table 10). For example, some grantees in the site visits reported upgrading to the online version of an existing assessment tool. In contrast, relatively few grantees reported hiring new staff (12 percent) or having plans to hire new staff (7 percent) to collect and manage data related to the school readiness goals requirements.

As of fall 2013, one-quarter (26 percent) of grantees reported having someone on staff with a title such as data or evaluation manager. Such a position appeared to be more common among grantees

that provided both Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS) services than those that operated only Head Start (HS-only) or only Early Head Start (EHS-only) programs (see appendix D, table 10). In site visits, staff with these titles were often data entry personnel or information technology support rather than staff responsible for data collection, analysis, or interpretation.

Grantee Views on Technological and Staff Capacity to Collect and Analyze Data
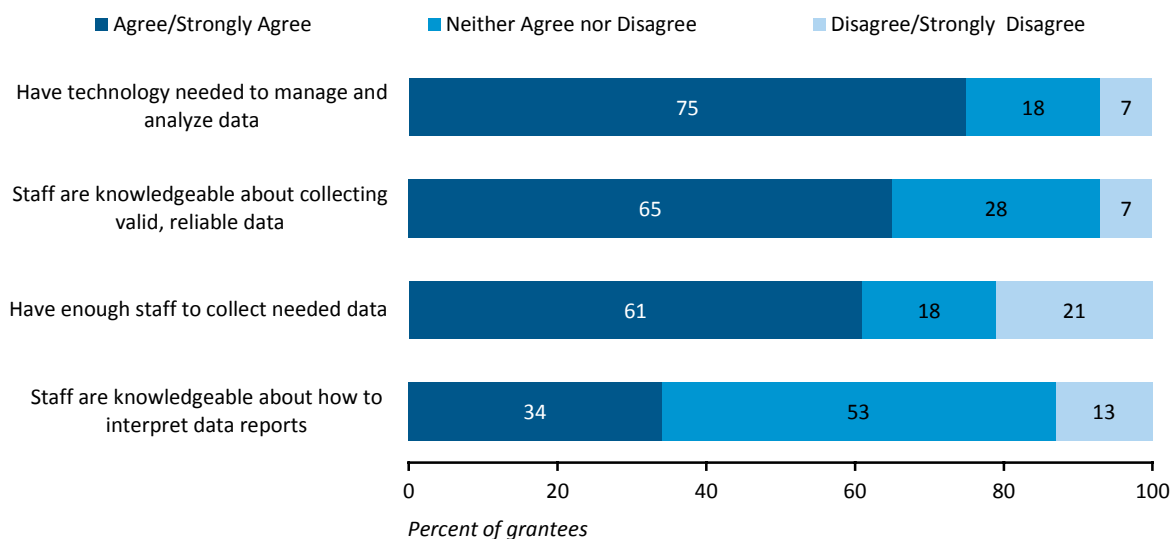
Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question C2, a–e (see appendix D, table 12).

Note: For "Have enough staff to collect needed data," the original statement was "We do not have enough staff to collect the data or information we need"; 21 percent agreed or strongly agreed. For ease of interpretation, the figure reverses the statement and response coding for that item.

Early Head Start and Home-Based Programs Reported Challenges

Survey data suggest that **EHS-only grantees may be less confident than HS-only or HS/EHS grantees that they have enough staff to collect data**, or that their staff are knowledgeable about collecting reliable data (see appendix D, table 12). This perception may reflect the smaller size of EHS-only grantees; additional analyses of survey data showed that grantees with enrollment of less than 150 children generally have more concerns than larger grantees about having enough staff for data collection and having staff with sufficient knowledge to collect reliable data.[24]

In addition, **data collection is often more challenging for home-based than center-based staff,** according to site visit data. Home visitors self-reported—and program managers corroborated—having a hard time conducting and documenting child observations and reliably completing required child assessments during the 90 minutes they spent with families each week. They had to balance these activities with their other responsibilities during home visits, primarily engaging with parents on their families' needs and progress. Having access to the home environment and ongoing information from parents about how their children were doing was beneficial in determining children's progress and needs. Yet sometimes home visitors were unable to score a child on a particular skill because they felt they had not spent sufficient time with the child to make an accurate assessment.

Contracted family child care providers presented an additional challenge, because their data collection activities could not be monitored in the same way as a site supervisor could monitor staff in a center-based classroom. For example, the family child care service coordinator in one Head Start program reported how it was harder to get buy-in from contracted family child care providers to implement their school readiness goals plan:

> There is so much paper work that the providers have to do to contract with. It gets to the point where they don't want to partner because of the paperwork. If the providers don't see the same picture of high quality, it's not a match. If they're not in it for the right reason, they won't stay because Head Start has a lot of requirements and we'll continue to raise that bar.

Center-based staff often felt the school readiness goals requirements were reflective of their current Head Start programming, but staff working in home-based settings had a larger learning curve to adapt to the new requirements. As some managers explained, teachers were "already doing it without even realizing it," as setting goals and using assessment tools are built into their practice to assess children's development, plan according to children's needs, and individualize instruction. Home-based staff had to adapt to using new assessment tools or to collecting data more frequently than they had in the past.

Who Analyzes the School Readiness Data?

Education Managers and Other Executive Leadership Played Lead Roles in Data Analysis

The education manager or coordinator played a role in compiling information for reports on school readiness goals in more than half of all grantees (54 percent), according to the survey data (see figure 5.2). Other members of executive leadership, including Head Start or Early Head Start program directors, also played a key role, compiling information in 46 percent of the grantees. (Respondents were encouraged to report all individuals responsible for compiling reports and so could report more than one individual.) Only 14 percent of grantees reported that data, research, evaluation, or outcomes managers or staff had this responsibility; in many programs, these staff played more of a data entry role and less of a data analysis and reporting role. In 12 percent of grantees, other members of the education support or supervision team (rather than the education manager) had responsibility for compiling reports.

Staff Responsible for Compiling Information to Report Overall Progress on Goals
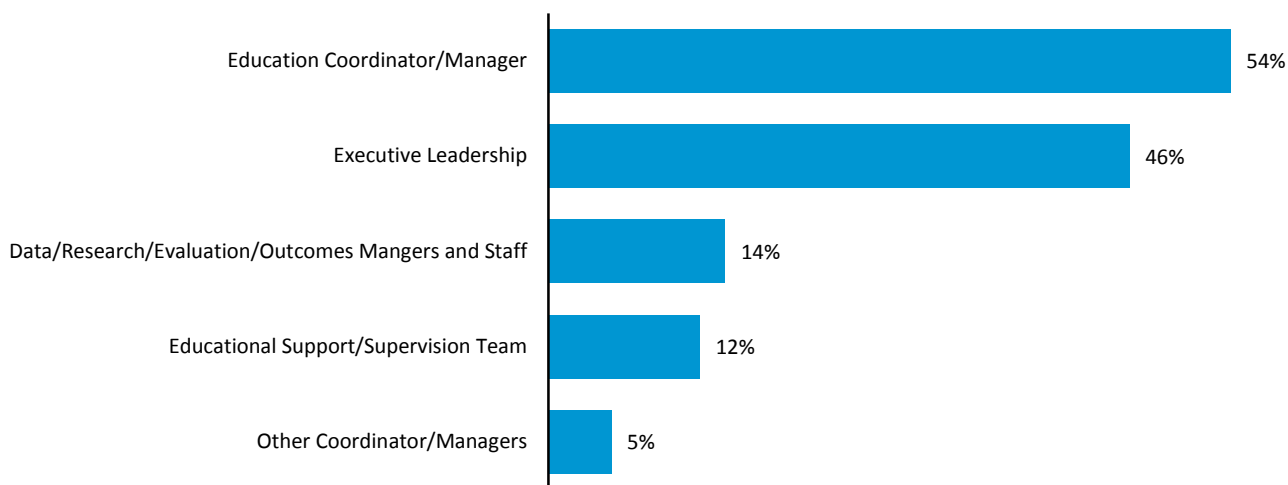
Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question E1 (see appendix D, table 15).
Notes: Total sums to more than 100% because more than one type of staff person could be reported. "Executive leadership" includes program directors and assistant directors as well as staff with titles such as chief operating officer, director of early childhood programs, and so forth.

Analyzing the data was kept separate from data collection in almost all sites visited. Many teachers in visited sites discussed how they collected and entered data, but once entered, someone else had the responsibility of analyzing the data. One teacher's comments are illustrative:

> Q: What do you do with the data after?
> A: We turn it in to the office, they put it in the computer and send out the sheets that tell us where the kids stand as far as certain goals and categories.

Teachers with access to online assessment systems generally used it for snapshot looks at where students were at any given time, but they did not aggregate or analyze data themselves. Some teachers did not have direct access to assessment data once they were submitted to their supervisors; this was particularly true of teachers in centers not using TS GOLD.

Deeper analysis was generally the realm of the education manager or, in some cases, the data manager. These managers were responsible for compiling student data and examining trends; they also produced reports for teachers and other managers. They were typically the primary holders of the data; in several of the visited programs, only the education manager and the director had access to data across classrooms.

In all 11 fieldwork sites, managers sat down with teachers and went over the reports they produced. Typically, these reports focused on performance in the teacher's classroom, but in a few cases, respondents spoke of sharing program-level data with teachers. Some managers indicated concern about whether sharing that type of information with teachers was productive; as one manager said,

> Last year I did make a report, which classrooms were lowest and highest in each domain. I prefaced it that I was sharing for peer sharing. They responded well, they talked to each other, they shared lesson ideas, but I wasn't sure how that would go over.

How Often Do Grantees Conduct Aggregate Analyses of School Readiness Data?

All sites reported reviewing and aggregating the data at least three times per year, as the mandate requires. According to the survey, 77 percent of programs reported looking at aggregate data on school readiness a few times a year, 17 percent looked at aggregate data monthly, and 7 percent looked at them weekly (see figure 5.3). Analysis of data from the site visits suggested that technology and capacity to use the technology could make a difference in frequency of data review. In general,

those who were more comfortable with their assessment technology and had access to the electronic information reviewed the data more frequently.

Site visit interviews also suggested that even when formal aggregated data reports were produced only three times a year, **other kinds of ad hoc or informal data reviews often occurred more frequently.** For instance, at one HS/EHS site, full reports were produced three times a year, but classrooms were monitored monthly to check that the children were progressing as they should and that teachers were complying with the requirement to conduct assessments:

> We check to make sure that the things that need to be in the file are there. We check to make sure the screenings are done and on time, if the right tool was used. We check to see on the education side if the assessments were completed on time, if they were completed correctly and completely. We check to see the ILP [independent learning plan] and the goals to make sure it's done on time.

Some education managers reported in site visit interviews that they used the three-time yearly aggregate data reports to examine child development by goal at the classroom level, at the program level, and by age group. Such group analyses are often conducted both including and excluding children who have an identified disability and an individual education plan (IEP). In addition, some sites that had been using goals and assessments for more than a year compared outcomes across program years. As one site manager said,

> We look at it as an individual, as a group; I even look at it as a group within the provider. Then I compare across the providers. Then [I] evaluate myself and what I'm doing. So there's all different ways to look at that. More stuff pops out with the more trainings I go to.

Another manager described the data analysis process this way: "I'll look at 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, I'm always looking at the disability rate, I look at below, meeting, and exceeding expectations, and then I look for trends."

FIGURE 5.3

Frequency with Which Grantees Produced and Used Aggregate Data
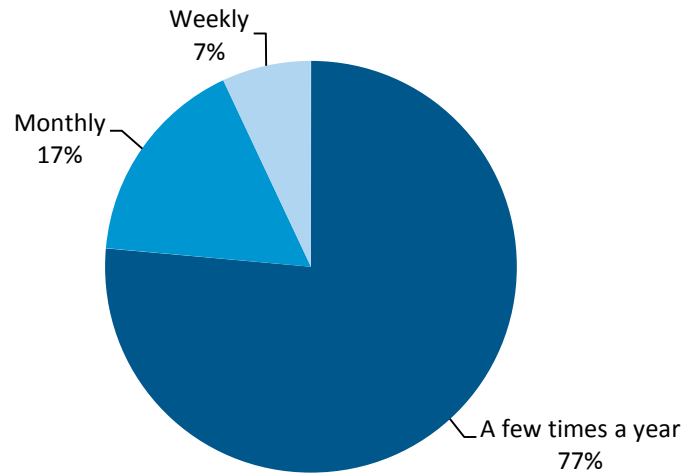
Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question C6 (see appendix D, table 13).

What Challenges Do Grantees Face with Data Analysis and Interpretation?

Staff Were Still Learning to Produce and Analyze Data

As shown in figure 5.1, grantees were not certain whether their staff had the ability to analyze data. **When directly asked how much of a challenge it was to analyze data related to goals, many said it was a medium (43 percent) or big (22 percent) challenge.** Somewhat smaller percentages reported a specific challenge with making sure data accounted for the needs of certain groups, such as dual-language learners and children with special needs; this was viewed as a medium (33 percent) or big (19 percent) challenge by about half of all grantees (see figure 5.4).

Many grantees also saw "interpreting data to understand children's progress" as a medium challenge (41 percent), though relatively few saw it as a big challenge (8 percent). It is not clear why grantees saw more challenge with analyzing data on goals than with interpreting data on children's progress; one hypothesis is that some early childhood professionals are leery about "data analysis" but are comfortable with understanding children's progress.

FIGURE 5.4

Grantee Views of Challenges in Analyzing and Using School Readiness Data
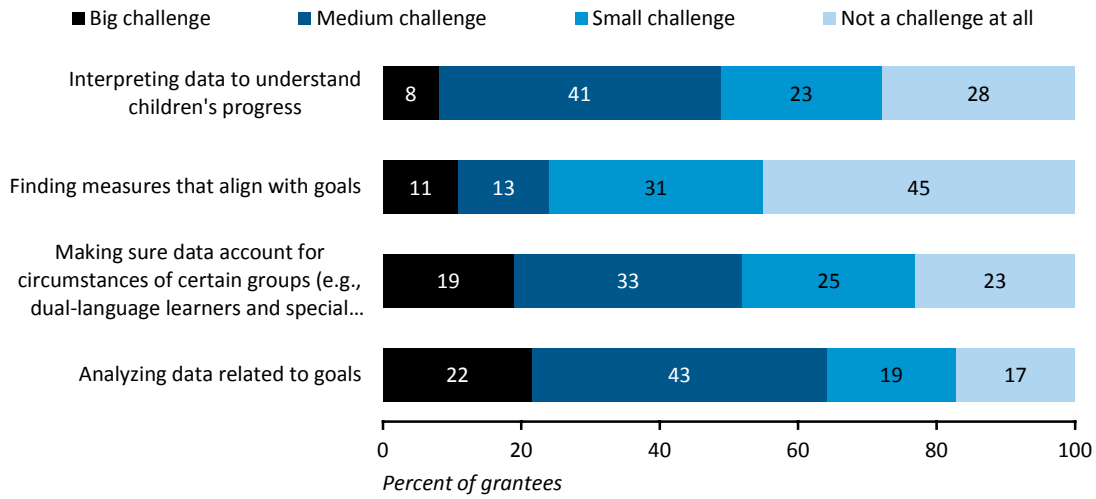
Legend: ■ Big challenge   ■ Medium challenge   ■ Small challenge   ■ Not a challenge at all

Category	Big challenge	Medium challenge	Small challenge	Not a challenge at all
Interpreting data to understand children's progress	8	41	23	28
Finding measures that align with goals	11	13	31	45
Making sure data account for circumstances of certain groups (e.g., dual-language learners and special...	19	33	25	23
Analyzing data related to goals	22	43	19	17

Percent of grantees

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question C14, a–d (see appendix D, table 14).

EHS grantees were more likely than HS grantees to view analyzing and interpreting data as a challenge. For example, 60 percent of EHS-only grantees (and 64 percent of HS/EHS grantees reporting on EHS programs) said that interpreting data to understand children's progress was a big or medium challenge, compared to 40 percent of HS-only grantees (and 40 percent of HS/EHS grantees reporting on HS programs). This pattern also was true for analyzing data related to goals (see appendix D, table 14). For example, 69 percent of EHS-only grantees reported that analyzing data related to goals would be a big or medium challenge, and only 5 percent reported it would be no challenge.

During site visits, some education managers expressed unease about their skills in data analysis. In some cases, this was due to lack of familiarity with the computer assessment systems. One education manager explained that she conducted a lot of the analysis "on paper and pencil" due to difficulties using the programs. In other cases, it was discomfort with data analysis more broadly. When asked how data interpretation could be facilitated, one manager said "Probably [with] some math training, seriously."

Setting Benchmarks Was Challenging

Education services managers, data managers, program directors, and other site visit respondents also had a hard time describing the process through which they determined how much progress was "enough," whether for an individual child or for the program as a whole. **Milestones were often**

determined by the assessments themselves. Most sites described looking for most children meeting or exceeding the standards as set out by the assessments (frequently called "widely held expectations") or being within normative guidelines for their age group, again as represented by the assessments. As one manager said, "The standards tell us where they should be."

Grantees also felt challenged in setting benchmarks for their programs. As one data manager described,

> Initially, I remember we said 85% on a certain goal. The regional office during their T/TA process, they said most programs are within a 65% range. So we used our resources to adjust the percentage—say the average was 65%, but we had good resources, so we increased it to say 68%. There is no standardization to come up with the percentage.

Similarly, another program director was concerned about whether she should set realistic benchmarks, or if the goal should always be 100 percent, even if that was unlikely to occur.

> In the beginning I think we may have been setting our outcomes too high. We wanted to say that 95% of all [the] children . . . that was not a realistic goal to say 95% could meet all of the goals. That would be lovely, but at that point it was unrealistic. If you set too high and don't meet them, people become frustrated and that's another problem.

Few programs explicitly set progress benchmarks to determine whether a goal was met. This practice seemed to stem from a desire to set goals for continuous improvement, rather than goals that "stop" when a certain developmental benchmark is reached. One education specialist explained the thought process in this way:

> I went to an Office of Head Start leadership conference, and before I went there, I said our goal for language is that every child is at 90% of age expectation, and how I decided that was [to] look at data for last few years, and look at baselines, and where they ended up, and then try to make a good guess, a good goal. Should I set the same goal, should I expect more? I won't set a goal like that this year, we want every child to meet or exceed their expectation. We're never done that, we're always expecting more from our children.

Staff Had Greater Comfort Analyzing Individual Data

Although 96 percent of grantees in the telephone survey reported that both managers and teachers used aggregate data, in site visits teachers mostly reported looking at individual data. One teacher, for example, when asked about reviewing data, responded, "We use the individual child report; we use that a lot in evaluations. I can see exactly where they are at whatever age level." During site visit interviews, program staff at various levels expressed much more comfort in using assessment data to

track the school readiness progress of individual children during the course of the year than in analyzing the data more broadly.

How Do Grantees Report on Progress to Parents, Policy Council, and Governing Body?

Grantees Reported Progress to Parents

Most parents who were interviewed during the site visits were not familiar with the school readiness goals mandate or the specific goals their program set. They were very familiar, however, with setting school readiness goals for their individual children, a process that sometimes involved parents and teaching staff working together to set specific goals.

According to the survey, **three-fourths of grantees (75 percent) shared aggregate data with parents** (see appendix D, table 11). Among programs that shared aggregate data with parents, a majority reported sharing this information a few times a year. However, in interviews parents rarely noted such aggregate information.

Instead, **parents focused on reports describing their own child's developmental progress.** Parents enjoyed getting information about their child's progress and seeing information about their child placed in a normative context.

From the site visits, it appeared in most cases that formal reports with information about their child's developmental progress were provided to parents three times a year, with interim reports produced on a more casual basis. As one parent explained,

> We have three parent-teacher conferences a year, fall, winter, and spring. And it's nice to see, your teacher can tell you, they need [us to focus on supporting] this [aspect of development]. We also have daily reports, they're little reports they send home, about what they're doing academically, their behavior in the classroom. It tells them what they're doing at school, or it'll say, we talked about the letter x, send them on an x hunt at home, so it carries over to the home.

Universally, parents saw the reports as helpful—one parent commented,

> It's helpful; it allows us to communicate with his therapist about what he needs to work on at school. They're really good at communicating with the program on what he needs to be doing there. His therapist helps the teacher with what they need to do with them.

Although most parents remembered only getting information about their child, a few parents also noted overall program goals, including some parents who had been on the Policy Council. As one parent said, "We have a green booklet that has all the different goals the program has. It's up to you if you read it, but I do."

Grantees Reported Progress to Policy Council and Governing Body

All programs reported sharing aggregate data with the Policy Council and 99 percent shared aggregate data with their governing body, according to the survey data (see appendix D, table 11). The majority shared aggregate information with the Policy Council and the governing body a few times a year.

GRANTEES PLANNED TO USE WRITTEN REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Nearly all programs (97 percent) planned to produce written reports on progress toward school readiness goals (see appendix D, table 16), including 78 percent who planned to conduct presentations on progress toward goals in addition to producing written reports. The remaining 4 percent planned to conduct presentations only.

Of those grantees producing written reports, over a quarter (28 percent) will produce reports focused specifically on goals, and roughly another quarter (27 percent) will incorporate information on goals into reports covering a broader range of topics. The remaining 46 percent of programs will use both approaches (see figure 5.5).

The majority of grantees planned to produce written reports a few times a year (78 percent), a smaller share (20 percent) will produce reports annually, and the remaining programs (3 percent) will produce reports monthly. Similar timing is planned for presentations on progress toward goals.

FIGURE 5.5

Grantee Plans for Report Contents
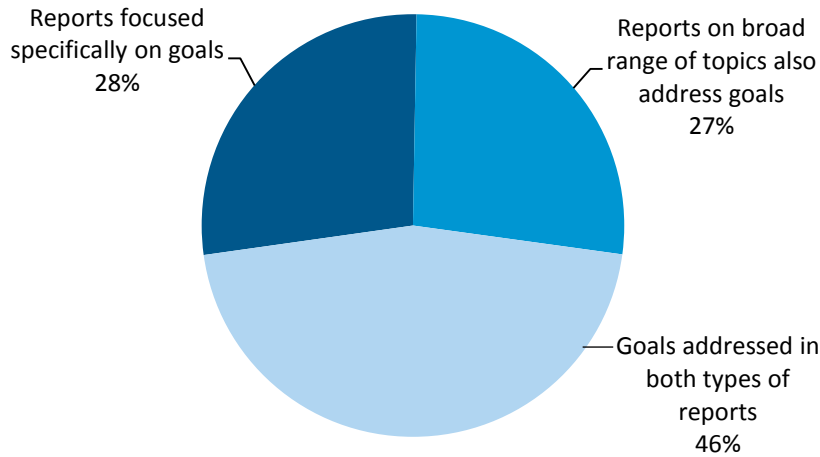
Reports focused specifically on goals 28%

Reports on broad range of topics also address goals 27%

Goals addressed in both types of reports 46%

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question E2, a–c (see appendix D, table 16).

Site visit data suggest that **reports to the Policy Council and the governing body typically included more aggregate information about the program as a whole than reports to parents**. These reports were typically presented at scheduled meetings and were often accompanied by presentations that walked stakeholders through the reports. One Policy Council member explained management would:

> show us a progress report like they give the parents but more detailed, [and] not individualized. It tells us about all the centers together and how they're progressing. You have to look more in detail to know which centers are carrying the most weaknesses. We try to find out what we can do to make this better or help the children get better or what teachers need help with.

MEMBERS OF POLICY COUNCIL AND GOVERNING BODY APPRECIATED REPORTS ON SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

Although the role of Policy Council in setting goals differed by program (and some Policy Council members were not familiar with the goals because they were set before the member's term on the council), members in all 11 sites visited expressed appreciation for these updates.

Similar information was generally shared with the governing body as well, again through regular (two or three times a year) meetings. Such presentations were almost always made by the program director. Governing body members interviewed were somewhat familiar with the overall grantee school readiness goals, but approached the issue in their official capacity from a more budgetary

perspective.[25] That is, although governing body members knew of the goals, the progress updates they received were centered more on the implications of school readiness progress on the budget: What new resources would be needed? How was the program expanding? For example, in a Head Start program operated by a school district, one governing body member explained,

> We get those reports each time. We know where there is a need, a problem. For instance, someone had sent us a letter asking for an amount of money for classrooms and so we went to see the school board members. We understood we can't pay this money—it's not in our budget. We made them understand [that] "We're educating children, too, and preparing the children for your [school] program—if we prepare them, it's less work for your teachers."

The board used information on goals to make decisions about allocating resources and managing requirements.

A Look at AIAN Grantees: How Do Grantees Analyze Data and Report Progress?

The four AIAN grantees participating in the study had all implemented processes for collecting, analyzing, and sharing data on school readiness goals. All four used TS GOLD online as their primary child assessment tool and their primary source of data on school readiness. One grantee also incorporated school readiness measures from other sources including a screening tool, health records, and input from families. In all four programs, teachers and home visitors were responsible for entering observations into the TS GOLD system. Once entered, teachers were responsible for running classroom profile reports in three of the four programs, but in most cases, program leadership also ran reports for specific purposes. For example, one grantee explained the program director and education coordinator run analyses, but "very informally, to get the process started, I tell the teachers to run a very brief report at the end of the [assessment cycle] and tell them to look at it." In the remaining program, a member of the leadership team explained, "The reports are lengthy, so I take the data and put it on a spreadsheet. I will print that off and give it to staff so they can review each child and where they stand." This grantee also mentioned a consultant who serves as an education coordinator and performs some additional data processing.

Frequency and type of analysis. All four grantees reported looking at school readiness goals data at least three times per year as required by Head Start performance standards; one grantee with a year-round program did so four times a year. Only one grantee mentioned looking at aggregate data more frequently (weekly and monthly, depending on the report). At these checkpoints, the AIAN grantees looked at both individual- and aggregate-level data, but they differed in the groups they looked at in aggregate. Two grantees reported examining only outcomes for individual children and for their overall program, and the other two grantees mentioned examining outcomes by demographic characteristics such as age, classroom, and individual education plan status at each checkpoint.

Reporting. Three of the four grantees reported giving parents information about their own child's school readiness outcomes. Like grantees in the main study, AIAN grantees shared this information through parent-teacher conferences and, in one program, through individualized written progress reports produced by teachers. All four grantees shared information about programwide progress on goals via an annual report made available to parents and other community stakeholders. One grantee described being "very excited" about an upcoming meeting in which program staff planned to present a graph to parents showing programwide growth over the course of the year. Another grantee said they now share so much information with parents that "we have been able to build that partnership and have seen lots more involvement and questions we are being asked." One grantee also reported sharing progress on school readiness goals in meetings with local education agencies, including principals, kindergarten teachers, and other school staff.

All four grantees also shared aggregate data on progress toward goals with their program's Policy Council and tribal government. The AIAN grantees interviewed for the study had different mechanisms for communicating with tribal leaders. Two programs sent written monthly or quarterly progress reports directly to members of their Tribal Council, and another relied on a representative sitting on both the Tribal Council and the Head Start Policy Council to act as the program's information liaison to the Tribal Council. The fourth grantee reported progress on goals to tribal leadership through regular meetings with the administrator of the tribal government agency that oversaw all the tribe's social and educational programs; the administrator, in turn, reported to the Tribal Council and other officials.

Challenges. Several of the interviewed AIAN grantees described certain challenges related to collecting, analyzing, and reporting school readiness goals data. Two grantees commented that documenting children's development as part of ongoing assessment placed a big time burden on frontline staff. A third grantee, when asked whether teacher burden presented a challenge, explained their classroom schedule alleviated that burden:

> I think we have solved that by having [one teacher workday per week] for meetings and conferences . . . or inputting [observation data]. We have created the time for that. It seems to be working well.

One grantee operating a very small program faced a big challenge making the transition to the online version of TS GOLD, explaining teaching staff "were overwhelmed with TS GOLD. It has been a rough road implementing that." This respondent further explained they had "lost one person because if it. She was a hard worker, but she spent hours and hours and hours just punching in the notes." This respondent added,

> We had . . . people who were new to computers. We almost went back to the paper form, but TS GOLD was looking to do everything online. The paper forms were not as detailed as they could be, and some of the reporting would have been harder. [TS GOLD online] shows everything. It is a time investment and it requires more money. We would like to see a bit more increase in budget if they are going to increase these requirements.

The other grantees seemed to have fewer challenges with TS GOLD or had identified strategies to address the challenges. For example, one respondent said that after looking at reports from the assessment system, management realized they needed to provide additional training to help staff understand the software and tool. Another grantee noted they "have always done the Creative Curriculum, but this is the first time we used the TS GOLD web-based system. It is very, very handy." Prior to switching to TS GOLD the program carried out analysis "manually, which was very labor intensive." This respondent commented that being able to pull information from the electronic system and look at outcomes in aggregate was "very nice." Further, this respondent felt that aspects of the system facilitated more efficient teacher record keeping on children's development.

Grantees also described challenges around reporting progress. One grantee felt they received inadequate and contradictory information from different sources (Head Start T/TA, program specialist, program monitor) about what, exactly, school readiness goal reports needed to contain:

> When you are told you have to have something and you have questions, you should be able to have answers right away and not be having to run around with people contradicting each other. We just have to wing it and guess. And that is really frustrating.

One respondent described working hard to make the reporting on school readiness interesting and relevant to different audiences: "I try to keep it innovative, to try to think outside the box. If you stay in the box, it is very dry, and it is boring for people."

Chapter 6. How Do Grantees Use School Readiness Goals and Data to Inform Program Planning and Practice?

According to federal regulation, Head Start grantees are required to set school readiness goals, collect data to measure progress toward goals, and use that data "in combination with other program data . . . to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum, instruction, professional development, program design and other program decisions" [45 CFR § 1307.3 (b)(2)(i)]. One goal of this study was to learn more about how grantees use their goals and related data to inform program planning and practice. This study begins to explore these issues, but given the complexity of the topic and the relative newness of the increased emphasis on school readiness goals and analysis of related data, the findings should be viewed as early conclusions.[26] This chapter draws on data from the telephone survey, site visits, and tribal interviews to describe the ways in which Head Start directors and staff viewed school readiness goals as useful and the changes they had made or had observed in their programs as a result of this mandate.

Do Grantees View School Readiness Goals as Useful?

Grantees Overwhelmingly Reported That Having Goals Would Be Useful

Grantees had positive feedback when asked about the usefulness of the school readiness goals mandate. **Ninety-three percent of survey respondents agreed "having school readiness goals will be useful";** only 7 percent neither agreed nor disagreed (see figure 6.1). None of the survey respondents disagreed with the statement, reflecting the widespread buy-in of program directors and education managers in the usefulness of school readiness goals.

FIGURE 6.1

Grantee Views on Whether School Readiness Goals Will Be Useful
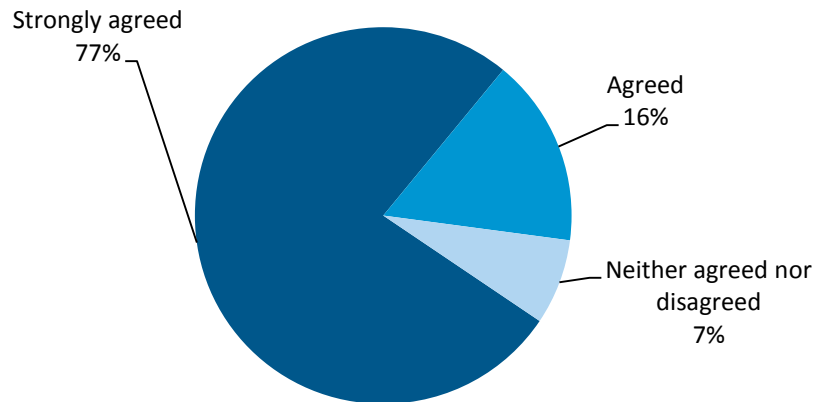
Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question B6 (see appendix D, table 7a).

The site visit interviews corroborated these survey findings. When asked how they reacted when they first learned about the new mandate, most respondents in the site visits—from program directors and managers to teachers and home visitors—felt that the requirements aligned well with the work they were already doing, and they had positive views toward having school readiness goals. Many of them pointed out that Head Start has always been about school readiness and that their routine teaching practices already involved assessing children's development and establishing goals to target areas in need of support. "That's a hardly a new mandate in Head Start," one director commented. "[School readiness] was a focus from the inception of Head Start back in the Johnson administration."

However, **grantees noted that the latest mandate provides motivation to further formalize that work**. As one education manager said, "That was always our goal, to have them ready for kindergarten. This was just another way of formalizing it, looking at it a bit more intentionally." In particular, grantees felt that having written goals and objectives encouraged them to clarify their vision so everyone is "on the same page." Some staff reported that they were "doing it without realizing we were doing it," but now they had better documentation and used data more purposefully than before. Having school readiness goals also strengthened communication with parents to "empower parents to become involved and to let them know they're needed and respected." The aspect of the mandate that asks grantees to align goals with state early learning standards, other standards such as the

Common Core, and assessment tools encouraged grantees to more systematically bridge the gap between Head Start and kindergarten.

One governing body representative described the value of the process this way:

> To have it down on paper and to say this is where we are and where we're going and our expectations of teachers, parents, and kids—it's really good. We have these measurements going on consistently. Now it's a concise cohesive system.

An education manager reported why she was pleased when she learned of the mandate:

> I like school readiness goals because it causes teachers to have a different frame of mind. It's one thing to have that [teaching] degree and another to implement it. It's caused us to take a better look at our agency to think about how to improve, how to improve our community: How can we better serve our parents and our community?

Early Head Start Grantees Were Largely Positive about School Readiness Goals

Early Head Start program directors and staff described welcoming the opportunity to be part of a school readiness discussion that is sometimes limited to Head Start preschoolers. At first, some Early Head Start teachers and home visitors wondered how "school readiness" applied to their work with infants and toddlers, but once they learned the details, they realized **the requirements aligned well with their practices**. As one Early Head Start director explained,

> I was excited! Working with babies, people don't see the value in it. We have a tagline that says school readiness begins at birth . . . everything we're doing relates to the school readiness of the child. On the first conference calls with the regional office, I said, "Come on! I have school readiness here." And she said, "Oh, we're not ready for Early Head Start yet." They did it with Head Start first. And one of these days we're going to start with the infants and toddlers and realize it's a progression from there to the older kids!

Although the majority of EHS-only grantees saw benefits to school readiness goals, they were not as overwhelmingly positive as other grantees. According to the survey data, **77 percent of EHS-only grantees agreed that having school readiness goals would be useful**, compared to 100 percent of HS-only and 91 percent of HS/EHS grantees.[27] No such difference was seen by program size.

How Are School Readiness Goals Used by Program Staff?

Grantees Rated Goals as Useful for a Range of Purposes

Grantees were asked in the telephone survey to rate on a scale of 1 (not at all useful) to 5 (extremely useful) specific ways the school readiness goals would be useful for various aspects of program planning and operations. On average, **grantees reported that having goals would be somewhat to extremely useful for all the purposes suggested in the survey** (see figure 6.2). The areas rated most highly included staff professional development ($\bar{x}$ = 4.7), teacher planning for daily classroom activities ($\bar{x}$ = 4.5), programwide strategic planning ($\bar{x}$ = 4.4), and teachers' work with individual children ($\bar{x}$ = 4.4). Programs with a home-based component also viewed having goals as useful to home visitors' work with individual children, but the average usefulness rating was slightly lower for home visitors than for classroom teachers ($\bar{x}$ = 4.2). Additional areas for which goals were, on average, rated somewhat useful included day-to-day program management ($\bar{x}$ = 4.0), program budgeting ($\bar{x}$ = 3.7), and decisions made by the Policy Council ($\bar{x}$ = 3.6) (see appendix D, table 17).

FIGURE 6.2

Grantee Views on Usefulness of Goals for Various Aspects of Program Planning and Management
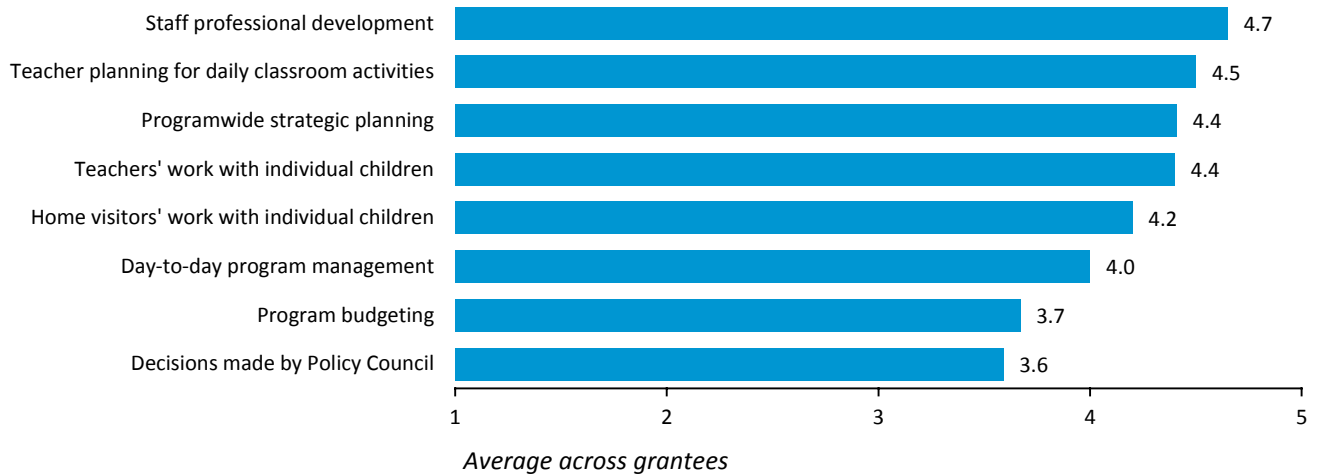
Average across grantees

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question D2, a–g (see appendix D, table 17).

Note: Ratings use a 1–5 scale on which 1 = not at all useful, 5 = extremely useful.

School Readiness Goals Helped Program Managers with Planning and Decisionmaking

School readiness goals helped program managers to plan professional development and training and technical assistance (T/TA) for individual teachers, allocate resources for classroom materials, make staffing decisions, and use data more frequently and purposively.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND T/TA FOR INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS

Tracking progress toward school readiness goals helped program directors and managers identify strengths and areas in need of improvement at the program, center, and classroom levels. This information was used to both plan professional development activities and to target T/TA to specific teachers demonstrating a need in a particular area. Nearly all the participating programs provided examples of how they organized staff trainings in recent years in response to the results of their child assessments, and in some cases in response to assessments of classroom quality [i.e., the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)]. For example, one education manger mentioned investing heavily in math training in the previous year and

reported an increase in math assessment scores after the training. This year their literacy assessment scores were low, so they were planning a training focused on that domain.

In another program, the director described how data aided in program and staff development:

> [The data] helps us to target training needs. It helps us to see where we are as an agency . . . look at what's going on each in community, the staffing, cultural dynamics, etc. Then we can take a wide look at domains and variation from community to community and center to center. Being able to look at that big picture helps us make decisions on training topics, where to pull energy into staffing or finding people with expertise or skills. Having that wide picture helps us do that more effectively.

Other managers and site supervisors discussed the usefulness of school readiness goals data for supervising individual teachers. If a particular classroom was not reaching a targeted goal, supervisors or mentors met with teachers to strategize and offer ideas for lessons to boost skills in that area. In some cases they identified additional teacher training or classroom resource needs; in other cases, they identified other reasons for the patterns, such as the unique circumstances of the children in that classroom. An assistant director in one program explained how together her education team tried to make sense of the data:

> If a classroom as a whole has poor motor skills they'll look at—Is the class going to the gym? What are they doing? How can they intervene? They tailor it to the specific classroom or specific children if necessary. Every time the data comes out they look at how the children are tracking. Are they making progress? Why or why not? Between teachers, education coordinators, and the education manager they fine tune it to figure it out: Is it the teacher, the family, something else?

ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES FOR CLASSROOM MATERIALS

In addition to investing in further T/TA, program directors and managers in half of the programs visited described **allocating funding to purchase new materials to make progress toward their school readiness goals**. If they noticed a particular developmental area was low, they asked themselves: What supplies and materials could we purchase to make an improvement? As one education manager stated, "I look at materials in the classroom and if there are materials we could get when we do our ordering that would help enhance if something is low." Another education manager in a large agency mentioned how having goals helps get approval for additional funding from the board: "We can say our outcomes are low in math and they'll say, 'Oh! What do you need?'" Similarly, one Early Head Start teacher remarked that having the goals in place gave her some leverage to ask for new materials. She commented: "I had two boys that wanted to push things. I was able to go to the manager and say, 'I am really . . . I am lacking toys to push,'since the goal was cause and effect. So it can be really helpful."

STAFFING DECISIONS

School readiness goals combined with other program-level data played an important role in making staffing decisions in 4 of the 11 sites visited. One large program analyzed their aggregated school readiness data by center and classrooms within centers and noticed a disparity in progress across centers. The director described how she had to make the difficult decision of relocating staff to provide more equity of services and to provide opportunities for peer mentoring:

> [We had] one center with a lot of weakness. We needed to dissipate those people. Likewise, we had one center with all strong people. We wanted equity. I moved a strong teacher to a center that needed a model of good teaching. We also changed around most of our site supervisors. We did days of sitting with staff lists and the ECERS, CLASS scores, evaluations. That was a use of data so we can back up the decisions we made.

Similarly, another program changed teaching team assignments to better match teachers with different and complementary strengths. The other two programs made strategic hiring decisions in response to their experience with school readiness goals. One program hired a new employee to handle data entry so teachers could focus on being with the children and not have to spend time manually entering assessment data. The other program hired a new director of curriculum and an early childhood education coach to provide additional support in implementing their school readiness plan.

FREQUENT AND PURPOSIVE DATA USE

Program directors and managers in several of the programs visited reported that as a result of the school readiness mandate they were **using data more frequently and purposively than they had previousl**y. Going through the process of defining their school readiness goals—the specific areas in which they wanted to make improvements—encouraged them to start asking questions and examining the data in a more meaningful way. They knew children were making gains but never really recognized before how much improvement they were making and what changes they should make to improve areas in which there were fewer gains. One director described how across the agency staff members were using data for multiple purposes:

> We're more intentional about how we use the data and how we integrate it into the everyday work we do. We're making progress in that. The aggregation of the data helps support decisionmaking at the program level to see where there are trends as an agency. At the day-to-day site level, the teachers know where the children are.

A few grantees discussed attempting to use multiple data sources—not just child assessment data—to examine school readiness.

> The problem I have [is] with making the school readiness plan just based on the child outcomes data. It's more than assessing them three times a year. I think that the plan should not solely be based on that. I don't know how other Head Start programs have been doing it, but that's how

we develop the plan and the professional development trainings, coaching and support. [Child outcome data have] helped guide us, but there can be more integration. We need to do more intentional alignment with that. We need to somehow bring in all of the service areas and make sure the school readiness goals are not just the education manager's job. Really looking at our PIR [Program Information Report] data, screenings, number of children with disabilities . . . and setting realistic goals. Taking a look as a team.

For example, the data manager in one program discussed linking their child assessment data to attendance data to graphically depict how children who have better attendance are more prepared for school than children with poor attendance. She created a handout with this information for staff to share with all parents at the beginning of the school year.

Another manager noted the need for direct classroom observation as well as data review to better understand observed child outcomes:

I go to the classroom to see what's going on. Maybe it's sensitivity. Maybe teachers are not scaffolding. Maybe they're not building on what children already know. I'm looking at adult-child interaction.

Another manager described herself as "play[ing] detective" when trying to explain why some children were not performing to expectation.

The use of **electronic assessment tools and data systems**—in some cases a recent addition to the program—**facilitated the use of data in new ways**. Some program directors and managers said that having a data system in place, and not necessarily having school readiness goals, had encouraged their better use of data. However, grantees who had technology to analyze data were better able to respond to the school readiness goals mandate (and grantees without such technology had more challenges, as discussed below on what supports programs said they needed). A data manager in one program described how their electronic assessment tool (Teaching Strategies GOLD) helped to make improvements in instruction and the quality of services:

We're more aware of how children have been doing and how to increase those gains. I think we've made tremendous gains in the quality of services—lesson planning, assessing children. Because of technology we've made strides in how we document that—videos, pictures, and recording things. [Without technology] I think we'd still be providing quality services, but I don't think we could improve as much each year. I don't think it's the school readiness goals that let us do that. I think it's having a system that allows us to aggregate and analyze data that helps us.

As this data manager mentioned, not only having the data system in place, but also having the hardware (such as tablets for taking pictures of children's work and capturing anecdotal notes on the spot), helped staff to better collect evidence and analyze reliable data.

School Readiness Goals Helped Teachers and Home Visitors

Program staff commented on the ways that having school readiness goals and data were useful to teachers and home visitors. Specifically, goals helped teachers and home visitors to be more intentional in their planning and instruction; identify specific needs of individual children; identify areas in which they needed training; communicate more effectively with parents; and validate their work in terms of communicating with stakeholders. Each of these improvements is described below.

INTENTIONAL PLANNING AND INSTRUCTION

Program staff commonly reported how **teachers were better able to plan instruction and be more intentional in their teaching**. Other terms respondents used included "purposeful," "aware," "observant," and "cognizant."

Teachers compared previous training on individualizing instruction based on children's needs to the new goals-based framework, which allowed them to look at where their class was as a group. School readiness goals served as a "guide" and a "reminder" for skills they needed to target and helped them to prioritize. Every lesson they planned could connect to the program goals so there was no question why they were doing a particular activity. As one teacher said,

> It gives you insight into what they want you to have the children ready for. You don't have to figure it out and be puzzled, if you can always have those goals in your mind. It's good—you're not just blindly trying to figure it out.

An education manager described how having an agreed-upon set of program goals helped her program:

> It makes [teachers] more aware of what they're actually doing. When they see it in writing and know it's what they're supposed to be doing, it makes it more concrete. If they veer away from this, they're not getting their children ready for school. It gives us a map and guide to say this is the direction we need to be going in. It keeps us all on the same page.

Site supervisors also found the school readiness goals helpful in their efforts to supervise teachers and advise them on lesson planning.

> We are able to pull reports from [the assessment tool] which give us a guideline of where we might target as a group. If it looks like more than 15% of children haven't met goal, I will ask [the teachers] to target activities that will facilitate development with that particular measure.

Some teachers did not feel that having written goals made much difference in their practice. Besides documenting and assessing more frequently, they did not think they were teaching any differently. Any recent changes they had experienced were attributed more to using their assessment

system than to having written school readiness goals. One teacher captured this theme when she said, "We were doing everything; [now] we just have to do it in a more data and analysis type of way."

IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN'S INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Many teachers felt they knew their students well and could describe their strengths and weaknesses without looking at data reports. "It's pretty much telling what we know," one teacher stated, which summarized the opinion of many teachers. Yet the process of assessing children helped them to understand if children had achieved specific skills that they might not otherwise systematically observe in the classroom. That is, the process of **doing observational and other assessments three times a year made teachers more aware of the specific strengths and needs of each child, allowing better individualization of instruction**.

Some teachers explained why seeing data reports was helpful: "We already see what is happening. But when you have a paper with percentages, it triggers working on something more or improving something." In data reports, teachers looked at individual child progress as well as gains across the whole group and sometimes subgroups, which also informed their lesson plans and small group assignments (e.g., separating or mixing children at different developmental levels). One Head Start teacher commented, "It's like being a scientist" to describe how she and her team looked at data and brainstormed ways they could improve their teaching to get the results they wanted to see. Another respondent explained,

> If there's someone who's not progressing and there's not an IEP [individual education plan] or a family situation, that's when we turn to our support team—we have an academic support team. We'll get people to get together and group-think about that, what's going on in the classroom, see what we can do.

IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDED TRAINING

Several teachers mentioned that reviewing data reports had helped them to identify areas in which they needed additional training and support. These data included child outcomes data in addition to assessments of classroom quality such as CLASS and ECERS. **Data reports indicated skills or domains that were low, and some teachers reflected on these data with their supervisors and asked for recommendations for activities they could do or trainings they could attend.** For example, in one program, teachers asked for more science training as they felt less confident in their teaching in that area. The education manager responded to their request by sending teachers to a state training and conducting peer training in-house.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Across the programs visited, teachers and home visitors (in the programs that had home-based services) felt that **having a clear set of school readiness goals helped them in their daily work with families**. In a way, the goals were a strategy to increase parental engagement with their children. Teachers and home visitors were able to talk to parents about the skills their children needed to be ready for kindergarten and the steps children needed to take to build those skills with the assistance of their parents. Based on how individual children were developing and the goals they were still working toward, teachers recommended targeted activities for parents to work on with their children at home. When asked about changes they had seen in the program as a result of the school readiness mandate, staff commonly reported seeing a difference among parents and their understanding of what school readiness means. As one Early Head Start teacher explained,

> I think the parents understand more. That's where I see the real value. Because they'll say to me, "Why aren't you teaching letters, numbers, and reading?" After they've been to a meeting, they understand their child is working on reading by doing other activities that lead to that.

Early Head Start teachers and home visitors in particular felt encouraged by having documentation to share with parents about the importance of school readiness, even for infants and toddlers, because many parents saw the program as only child care or babysitting and not early education. One home visitor shared this thought:

> It's not just play—we're working toward a goal. I can say that this is something you're trying to achieve. It shows the parents once they've accomplished something we can add another [goal]. They see school readiness is tied to our activities. For me it's mindset. I'm working on something. It's a goal I'm setting, meeting, and adding to.

Head Start teachers often communicated to parents the program's expectations for children in terms of the kindergarten expectations and state standards.

> Some parents don't realize that at 3 years old they should start thinking about this. Now that the expectations are so much higher we need to be thinking about this. A lot of parents think that we're glorified babysitting. With the push for Common Core and school readiness, parents are realizing the extent of what preschool should be.

Several teachers talked about the program's kindergarten transition plans and wanting to do more than just help parents register. Talking to parents about their goals for their children and sharing with them reports on how their children were progressing was beneficial for the transition process, so parents would know which skills to continue working on. Parents agreed that learning about their children's development was extremely helpful to them. One mother of a Head Start child described feeling more prepared to engage in conversation with her daughter's future kindergarten teacher because of the information she had learned about school readiness goals:

Because if . . . (my daughter) wouldn't be ready for kindergarten in some area, we could prep the kindergarten teacher and we could help (my daughter) build up. We know the goals ahead of time and what's been worked on. [The goals help us] know what we're talking about. It shows the [kindergarten] teacher that the parent's involved and we can work together to get our child where she needs to be.

VALIDATION OF TEACHERS' WORK

A few teachers mentioned that school readiness goals were useful in terms of validating their status as professionals. As degreed educators, they felt that the increased emphasis on school readiness was important and necessary, and at the same time **it confirmed the value of their approach in the classroom.** One Head Start teacher commented,

For me personally, it's been really useful because it now validates what I've been doing in the class. I show parents that I'm educating kids through play. I don't do a skill and drill. They'll get that in K. Now that the school readiness goals are in place and they're on paper, it's a validation for me. Now you have in the back of your mind, "Am [I] doing this for filler or because it contributes to school readiness?" It validates you and makes you feel like you're doing the right thing.

This sense of validation was experienced when communicating with parents, kindergarten teachers, and other stakeholders about school readiness goals. Many staff discussed facilitating the transition to kindergarten by meeting with kindergarten teachers and speaking with them over the phone, but a few mentioned that more needed to be done to bridge the gap between Head Start and kindergarten. Setting school readiness goals that aligned with state educational standards (regardless of which school children would attend) was one way to build communication with local education agencies and to ensure recognition for the steps that Head Start had taken to prepare children for kindergarten. A site supervisor in a Head Start center stated,

From my experience, the kindergarten teachers and school officials may say, "Oh, you're preschool," and [having school readiness goals] might give us a more professional edge. When our teachers are talking to the kindergarten teachers, we have that lingo, that talk, to help bridge the gap.

Staff felt the goals had the potential to establish a common language for the expectations for children. Sharing data on what skills children had achieved and which skills they were still working toward would also improve children's transition.

What Were Grantees' Concerns about the Goals Mandate?

Because the foundation for the current requirements was laid with the 1998 amendments to the Head Start Act, most grantees thought they were already fulfilling certain components of the school readiness goals mandate and that a big shift in practice was not necessary. Nonetheless, grantees reported how the increased emphasis on looking at the program as a whole, identifying areas in which to improve, how to improve, and the tools needed to achieve their goals was very useful, particularly for program managers. As with any new initiative, some concerns emerged, as highlighted below.

Collecting Child Outcomes Data Was a Time Burden on Teaching Staff

First, the programs that were visited indicated **the new expectations increased burden on staff**. Although teachers were generally accustomed to doing some amount of observation to inform their work, the new requirements push grantees to further ensure data collection on child outcomes is comprehensive, valid, and reliable. The multiple steps of the process—documenting children's work in the classroom, collecting reliable assessment data, entering and analyzing data, reporting on outcomes, revising goals, and tailoring instruction—all required a significant amount of dedicated time and resources. As one teacher said,

> Time is [the biggest challenge]; when you are trying to get all of this information written down and trying to remember . . . and they are preschoolers, and there is so much going on, it is difficult.

She added,

> Just the paperwork—they want to see a tremendous amount. It is a good thing, but it is a hard thing. We get there at 8, leave at 3. Very little time to get everything accomplished. Just very difficult. We use some of the 2:30 to 3 time on that paperwork. We work during rest time.

As an education manager said, "If it's not documented, it never happened." She and other program managers worried about teachers not being able to spend as much time interacting with children. Although she saw the value of monitoring progress toward school readiness goals, another program manager echoed the concern of other respondents:

> The monitoring piece has really become such a large component of our job description that it seems as though we're constantly making sure things are being done correctly. It's good, but it's also strenuous on our time and ability because there is so much monitoring that needs to take place so it takes away from a lot of the interactive work we could be doing.

In a few programs, teachers reported having to share computers with multiple peers, not having reliable Internet access, and having to bring notes home to enter anecdotal evidence they collected, as there was never sufficient time to do so during the work day. Some teachers were not as computer literate as program leaders had expected, so training on new technology became an issue; as one director explained,

> Teachers who are nervous around the computer or who needed the basics of a computer training received a half-day training. Some of the teachers haven't been using the computers yet. Just this morning one of the teachers with most longevity needed to get a paper from a center. (She didn't know how to) just scan and e-mail.

In one program the administration had teachers focus on three school readiness goals per month for each child to lessen the burden on teachers, but even with this approach, teachers still reported having too much to track. The increased demand on staff time appeared less burdensome in the few programs that had hired a data entry person, given teachers tablets to use for ongoing documentation in the classroom, or had half-day programs allowing teachers afternoons for planning.

Analyzing data was also burdensome at the management level—even more so depending on the technology in place and the analytical capacity of program staff. Making good use of the data once they were collected also required time. As one education manager clearly described,

> I don't know how other programs are doing it, but you have to look at the data by program, by site, and by classroom for it to be meaningful. If you're only looking at program-level data, it isn't telling you much—whether you have a classroom that's doing well or not. For the data to be useful you have to look at it for the multiple levels, interpret the data as to why it's showing this and what are the different factors and variables that are going into each classroom. That takes a lot of time and you have to know your classroom and sites.

Defining and Measuring School Readiness across Ages and Settings Was Challenging

A few respondents described a challenge developing a common definition of school readiness that was sufficiently comprehensive, applicable across age groups and settings, reflective of stakeholder input, and measurable. An Early Head Start director shared this thought on the complexity of the issue:

> There isn't one common definition. Preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and parents think of all different things. In the federal guidelines it's still vague. It doesn't say a skill set that needs to be accomplished. The kindergarten teacher won't tell you a skill set, but they'll be upset if the kid isn't ready according to their standards. Parents want hard cold facts. They want colors, numbers, and letters.

As a result, **some grantees worried their goals would emphasize outcomes that could be easily measured with their child assessment tool** rather than the most important goals for children and families. In another program, the director was frustrated because she had developed a thorough set of goals broken down by age group, birth through age 5, but the assessment tool the program was using did not work well to measure all those goals. She specifically noted she was not satisfied with how this tool measured certain noncognitive domains: "[Office of Head Start] says write your own goals, but you are still stuck with what assessment that is out there."

Focusing on Measurable Child Outcomes Could Shift Focus from the Family

Some interview respondents were concerned that **the increased focus on school readiness would undermine the capacity of the Head Start program to focus on the whole child and family**. Some staff thought it was important to set school readiness goals that were inclusive of or integrated with their parent, family, and community engagement goals. When examining children's progress toward goals, they argued for the need to look beyond child outcomes for answers. A family services manager described a possible complication of setting goals:

> Goal setting is helpful in general. I do think it's important, however, that they're not so rigid. There has to be some process of looking at all the human factors that happen within our families and children that don't allow our goals to be achieved. I think it's scary because you set a goal and if you don't achieve it, you feel like a failure. I don't think that's necessarily the case—you need to take all facets in consideration.

Several programs that were visited were working to merge their school readiness goals and the parent, family, and community engagement goals into one plan, but this process was burdensome, particularly without any model to follow.

What Supports Do Grantees Want to Better Meet the School Readiness Goals Mandate?

As discussed, grantees reported many ways in which school readiness goals were useful to them, yet they also had concerns about the mandate and its effect on their programs. During site visits, interview respondents were asked what supports their programs needed to be better equipped to comply with the school readiness goals requirements. Responses varied depending on the program

and the position of the respondent, but several key themes emerged from the interviews: the need for T/TA, clearer expectations from the Office of Head Start (OHS), and increased data analysis capability.

Most commonly, grantees mentioned wanting **additional T/TA tailored to their individual program and its needs**. Some felt the available T/TA materials were too generic and needed to better consider factors such as program size and state requirements to use particular assessment tools. As one director of a small, rural program stated,

> The best TA we can get is when they come in and ask *us* what *we* need. They let me drive the agenda. I am not shy to say where we can do better. Now, how can we make it better? Am I in the ballpark? It's frustrating when they say they can't tell me that—what good if you cannot interpret the regulations? You just give me ideas but they are not telling me if I am on the right track.

Grantees suggested having **additional opportunities to network with other programs** with similar characteristics. They described wanting to see how other grantees approached setting school readiness goals, what their goals looked like, and what they were doing to work toward their goals. Ideas included having webinars, conferences, or organized calls, facilitated with the support of T/TA providers, to bring similar programs together.

Some grantees wanted **clearer information from OHS on the expectations for school readiness goals**, such as whether they should set benchmarks and how to do so. A few respondents mentioned it would be helpful to have a template to follow or model examples of school readiness goals from programs either in their state or like their own. Although the National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning and the Early Head Start National Resource Center developed resources with example school readiness goals, and some programs acknowledged how these resources were helpful, grantees wanted more specifics on how their goals should be written to ensure they were in compliance.

Finally, limitations in technological and analytical capacity posed a challenge for many programs. Grantees described wanting **additional funding for electronic data systems that could store longitudinal data and support more sophisticated data analysis**. Some of the analyses that staff wanted to do—such as comparing children who had been in the program for one year versus two, or looking at trends over several years—were not contained in off-the-shelf reports. Nor could staff generate them because, for example, records were not maintained in the system for children who left the program. Staff also wanted further T/TA on data analysis and interpretation. Many program managers explained they were not statisticians and were limited in their ability to manipulate the data and capture as much knowledge as they wanted to from the data.

The concluding chapter further discusses ways of supporting grantees as they continue with the ongoing work of refining school readiness goals, analyzing school readiness data, and using goals and data to inform program planning and practice.

A Look at AIAN Grantees: How Do Grantees Use School Readiness Goals and Data to Inform Program Planning and Practice?

The interviewed AIAN grantees differed in their views on the usefulness of the school readiness goals requirements. Two of the four generally felt that the school readiness goals were a positive addition to their program. One of these grantees noted that the goals—and the process of establishing and integrating them—provided a framework for developing new management systems, strengthening internal communication, and implementing processes for continuous improvement. The other explained the requirements "[have] given us direction . . . something to shoot for. As we use our tools to see where students are, we can adjust according to the class we have that year."

The third AIAN grantee agreed with this idea, saying the school readiness goals gave the program "somewhere to work toward or to look forward to. Our goal is helping [children] to be successful in school and life, and [the school readiness] goals provide us all with that focus." But this grantee also expressed concern that the school readiness goals requirements had been implemented without considering and eliminating overlapping requirements already in place, with the result that grantees were now being asked to do essentially the same work twice in two slightly different ways. The fourth grantee—the AIAN program experiencing the greatest challenge collecting and using data on children's outcomes—felt it was too soon to tell whether the school readiness goals would prove helpful.

Uses of goals and related data. All four of the interviewed AIAN programs reported using school readiness goals and related data to identify strengths and needs at the program, classroom, and/or individual levels. At the individual child level, grantees specifically highlighted their use of school readiness goals to individualize lesson plans and identify children with outstanding needs in certain developmental areas. In one program, school readiness goals informed processes to identify children with special needs, communicate with teachers about specific children entering kindergarten, and make referrals to outside partners. One grantee noted that having school readiness goals had helped staff to better monitor children's progress and more effectively communicate with parents.

At the classroom and program management levels, grantees reported using aggregate classroom data on progress toward goals to identify professional development needs for specific teachers and to make classroom purchases such as new books, classroom supplies, and other materials. One grantee explained they were trying to make "this whole process data driven," saying, "Some of our levels were low in math so based on that, we realized there was a need for professional development to get that score in range." Two grantees specifically highlighted that having aggregate classroom data on goals encouraged teachers to identify new strategies for teaching certain concepts or to request additional training in specific domains. Two grantees also mentioned that managers worked with teachers to make adjustments to curriculum to increase progress on school readiness goals. One explained,

> We make decisions about augmenting yearly curriculum to cover new sections or recover sections so we can move [children's outcomes] forward. For example, we can shorten the sections that kids learn easily. So we adjust as we see how the class is acting or reacting to the curriculum.

Factors supporting effective use of goals. Looking across the interviewed AIAN grantees, a variety of factors seemed to be associated with greater engagement in the use of school readiness goals to inform program planning and operations. An important consideration was whether grantees were able to access effective training for staff on assessment tools and to allocate the financial and human resources needed to collect, analyze, and use the data. One grantee noted that setting and implementing the goals required a significant investment of time and money and expressed frustration that the requirement was implemented on top of all the existing requirements without additional resources available to defray the costs. Two grantees also suggested that teachers' overall level of education affected their capacity to collect reliable data and to use electronic tools and assessment data to inform classroom practice; one specifically cited difficulty hiring a teacher with a BA degree as a primary obstacle to collecting child assessment data.

Two of the AIAN grantees were motivated to integrate the school readiness goals framework into program planning and practice because it became a useful mechanism for addressing shortcomings identified during monitoring visits. In those cases, it appeared the Region XI T/TA center was instrumental in helping grantees use the framework of school readiness goals for that purpose. One grantee noted the T/TA was especially effective because of the overall approach they took in their support:

> I have to say that our T/TA team from Region XI has done an excellent job helping us rebuild the program, given us direction. And during the difficult times, they were right there to help us use our own train of thought to help overcome barriers. They didn't come in like, "We are it and we are going to make you conform to this formula." It was more of, "Here is what we need to do. How can we help you develop what you have?" They were not telling us [there is just] one way . . . fitting the square peg into the round hole.

Another grantee commented that they found assistance to be the most effective when they were encouraged to "think outside the box" and be innovative.

A final important factor in the implementation of the school readiness goals requirements appeared to be having a clear understanding of OHS expectations. The grantee that was uncertain about the value of the requirements was also the grantee that expressed the most frustration with not getting sufficient information about what, exactly, was required. Three of the four grantees cited T/TA as helping them better understand the mandate and more effectively interpret and communicate data. Several grantees also mentioned the value of peer networking in supporting their efforts to understand and make the most of the requirements.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This research study provides the first systematic, independent analysis of how Head Start and Early Head Start grantees are responding to the federal mandate to set school readiness goals for children in their programs and to collect and use data measuring progress toward the goals. The combination of data obtained from a telephone survey of grantees and in-depth interviews with program staff and key stakeholders offers a clear picture of grantees' experiences and the supports they need to facilitate their efforts. This chapter begins by highlighting six cross-cutting themes that emerged from the research:

1. Grantees have largely embraced the school readiness goals requirements and reported using the goals and data in various ways;

2. Assessment tools played a central role in shaping goals and data use;

3. Time spent on school readiness goals and data was taken from other priorities;

4. Grantees were still learning how to analyze and interpret school readiness data;

5. Early Head Start grantees appeared to have more challenges in implementing school readiness goals requirements; and

6. Office of Head Start (OHS) guidance and technical assistance provided important supports as grantees implemented school readiness goals requirements.

After discussing each of these themes, the chapter concludes with implications for policy, technical assistance, and research.

Six Cross-Cutting Themes

Grantees Have Largely Embraced the School Readiness Goals Requirements and Reported Using Goals and Data in Various Ways

Grantees reported widespread compliance with key school readiness goals requirements. Almost all had set school readiness goals by the time of the survey, and typically had done so through a process

involving staff and parents. All sites reported analyzing and reviewing aggregate child outcomes data at least three times per year, as required, and nearly all reported producing a written report about their progress.

Moreover, the study's findings suggest that grantees' acceptance of the school readiness mandate goes beyond mere compliance. For example, nearly all survey respondents agreed that setting goals was a good use of time and that having school readiness goals will be useful to their program. Goals and data were seen as particularly useful for staff professional development and teacher planning for daily classroom activities.

The research team heard many positive views about the school readiness goals during the follow-up site visits conducted with 11 grantees, although some teachers did note an increased time burden associated with data collection (as discussed below). Respondents told the research team that school readiness goals helped teachers and home visitors to be more intentional in their teaching and classroom planning. Periodic data reports on child outcomes also helped managers identify areas in which the teaching staff would benefit from additional training, in terms of both programwide staff development and the training needs for individual teachers. Staff also expressed the view that school readiness goals provided a strategy for engaging and communicating more effectively with parents. When asked how the school readiness mandate had changed the program, staff commonly reported seeing that parents had a better understanding of what school readiness means. In addition, a number of teachers noted that the increased emphasis on school readiness validated their work as professionals.

In sum, the research team heard more enthusiasm for the goals and school readiness data than might have been expected about a new mandate. In the site visits, some program directors explained they addressed initial concerns among staff by pointing out that the requirements aligned with work they were already doing. Indeed, many staff reported that before the requirements they were already collecting data on child outcomes and planning activities based on children's individual needs. Some staff reported that they were "doing it without realizing we were doing it." Teachers and other staff generally felt that the formal requirements and more purposeful use of goals and data helped them plan activities and tailor instruction to address individual children's specific strengths and needs.

However, both the survey and in-depth interviews revealed some staff who questioned whether the school readiness mandate was necessary. Some teachers felt that having written goals made little difference in their classroom practice. In addition, some program directors and managers questioned why they had to write school readiness goals when their curriculum and assessment tool already laid

out clear goals and objectives and when Head Start performance standards already required grantees to set goals and conduct ongoing child assessments. These comments did not really question the underlying value of school readiness goals and tracking progress toward goals as much as the need for an additional formal mandate specific to school readiness goals.

Assessment Tools Played a Central Role in Shaping Goals and Data Use

As discussed throughout the report, comprehensive assessment tools played a large role in shaping the goals grantees chose and their process for analyzing data. A review of written documents suggested that many grantees derived all measures related to their school readiness goals from a single assessment tool. Moreover, several grantees in the site visits described selecting goals based on the measures available in their assessment tool.

When asked to describe how programs had changed since the advent of the school readiness mandate, many site visit respondents found it hard to know whether changes were due to the mandate or the program's adoption of new electronic tools and data systems, as both changes occurred in recent years. In many cases, the implementation of new tools appears to have been driven, at least in part, by the mandate; according to the survey, over half the grantees made improvements to technology as a result of the goals requirement. Some visited program directors and managers felt that the availability of electronic assessment tools and data systems was probably a larger factor in staff making more use of school readiness data than the requirement itself. Another site visit finding was that grantees without such technology were more likely to express challenges in responding to the school readiness goals mandate.

During the in-person interviews, staff at various levels often used the term "school readiness goals" broadly to refer to the assortment of formally adopted goals, the outcomes and measures accompanying the assessment tool, and/or the individual goals set for each child. A few respondents expressed the worry that their goals would become outcomes that could be easily measured with their child assessment tool rather than the most appropriate goals that the program should set.

Overall, grantees generally felt that their comprehensive assessment tools facilitated and supported the school readiness mandate. This support means, however, that the developers of the tools played an indirect role in shaping the goals—and the specific measures and benchmarks—that grantees used in defining and measuring school readiness at the local level.

Time Spent on School Readiness Goals and Data Was Taken from Other Priorities

Survey findings suggest that many grantees found it challenging to find time for goal setting. However, an even larger majority reported that the time spent on goal setting was a good use of time.

During the follow-up site visits, more concerns were voiced about the time burden involved in collecting assessment data. Teachers, and also some program managers, explained that a significant amount of the teaching staff's time was spent on the multiple steps involved with documenting outcomes for each child, either ongoing or periodically throughout the year. Some teachers reported that they had to bring work home at night, and some program managers expressed concerns that monitoring progress toward goals took away time from interacting with children. In grantees that lacked online data tools, data collected through paper and pencil had to be transferred into the electronic system, requiring data entry by teachers, data managers, education service mangers, or others.

In-depth interviews also revealed concerns that time and attention spent on school readiness goals was taking time away from parent, family, and community engagement goals. Several programs that were visited were working to merge their school readiness goals and the parent, family, and community engagement goals into one plan, but this process was burdensome, particularly without any model to follow.

Although grantees expressing concerns acknowledged the value of tracking children's progress toward school readiness, they felt it was important for the research team to know that it increased time burdens on teaching staff and had the danger of displacing other priorities.

Grantees Were Still Learning How to Analyze and Interpret School Readiness Data

Grantees reported collecting child observation data across multiple domains, with at least three assessments on each child for most school readiness measures. Analyzing and interpreting this amount of data was sometimes challenging for organizations.

Most, though not all, grantees reported having enough staff and technology in place to collect and manage their school readiness data. A bigger concern was the ability of staff to analyze and interpret the data. Survey respondents expressed mixed views regarding staff capabilities in this regard, and during the in-depth interviews, some program managers mentioned their own limitations in math and data analysis skills. Program staff at various levels expressed much more comfort with tracking the

school readiness progress of individual children, and seeing growth over the course of the year, than in comparing data for different groups of children. Several respondents mentioned in site visits that they would like further assistance and training on data analysis and interpretation to support their work on school readiness goals.

Few surveyed grantees reported challenges with finding benchmarks for school readiness goals. Yet a review of documents provided for the follow-up site visits showed very few benchmarks. Furthermore, education services managers, data managers, program directors, and other site visit respondents had a hard time describing the process through which they determined how much progress was "enough," whether for a child or a program. They relied heavily on the standards provided in the assessment tools. More generally, the site visitors found that although grantees working with the data could readily answer questions about what appeared in regular reports created by the system, they had a harder time answering more nuanced questions about what the data meant.

Some of the challenges with data analysis were temporary and related to the fact that grantees were rolling out new technologies at the same time. Programs reported feeling overwhelmed knowing they were required to report on child outcome data using a new set of assessment instruments on which staff had not been trained to a sufficient level of reliability and data systems that were not functioning properly. In another example, an education manager continued to do a lot of analysis "on paper and pencil" because she did not know how to get the reports she usually used from a relatively new computer assessment program. Over time, she expected to use the electronic system more efficiently.

As grantees mastered the process of producing basic data reports three times a year, some showed an interest in continuing to develop their ability to analyze data. For example, some grantees mentioned an interest in more longitudinal analysis, either tracking trends over several years or comparing children who had been in the system two years versus one. Some grantees noted that those analyses might require enhancements to their electronic data systems to allow storage of records over time. In other cases, additional training might help them do additional analyses with their existing systems.

Early Head Start Grantees Appeared to Have More Challenges Implementing School Readiness Requirements

Early Head Start grantees had set school readiness goals and were analyzing data three times a year or more often, similar to other grantees. The majority of Early Head Start grantees expressed positive views about the usefulness of school readiness goals for their programs. And teachers of infants and toddlers, like teachers of preschool children, found the emphasis on school readiness helped validate their work as professionals and helped them engage with parents around child development.

However, the data suggest that Early Head Start grantees may have had more challenges in implementing the school readiness requirements. For example, they were more likely to report not having the information they needed to set school readiness goals. Early Head Start grantees also were more likely than other grantees to report staffing challenges, such as not having enough staff, and not being sure staff had capability to collect reliable data or interpret data reports. These differences merit more study because they are based on small sample sizes, but they suggest particular challenges for Early Head Start programs.

Some of the staffing challenges faced by Early Head Start grantees were common to smaller grantees more generally. However, most of the observed differences between Early Head Start grantees and other grantees are likely to stem from other influences. Specifically, many factors affected the implementation of school readiness requirements in Early Head Start grantees; some of these are briefly mentioned here. To begin with, setting school readiness goals for infants and toddlers is a newer concept—in Head Start and in the field more generally—than is setting school readiness goals for preschoolers. Measuring child outcomes reliably is generally acknowledged to be more challenging for younger children. Moreover, many Early Head Start grantees provided services through home-based options, and it can be more challenging to incorporate child assessments into a home visit than into a classroom. Finally, the guidance with examples of school readiness goals for infants and toddlers was released after the guidance on goals for preschoolers, leaving Early Head Start grantees with less concrete guidance early on.

Despite the challenges, many Early Head Start program directors and staff interviewed during follow-up site visits told the research team they welcomed the opportunity to be part of the school readiness discussion that is typically limited to Head Start preschoolers.

OHS Guidance and Technical Assistance Provided Important Supports As Grantees Implemented School Readiness Goals Requirements

In developing their school readiness goals, many grantees relied heavily on the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* (the *Framework*). In fact, 4 of the 11 visited grantees followed the *Framework* closely, setting goals that reflected all 37 domain elements identified in the *Framework.* Grantees also cited other OHS materials, such as OHS Information Memoranda, resources from the Head Start's National T/TA Centers, other materials from ACF's online Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center(ECLKC), webinars and national training conferences as important resources.

When asked what helped move along the goal-setting process, several program directors and managers mentioned the support received from state T/A specialists working under contract to OHS and from ACF's regional Head Start program managers and specialists. Some education service managers spoke of sharing numerous iterations of documents with T/TA specialists, and others mentioned the T/TA specialists playing an even larger role in facilitating the writing of goals. For example, one state T/TA specialist convened a group of grantees to develop a joint approach to goals. In this case, and others, grantees mentioned the importance of peer support and gathering with other grantees in their area to share ideas about goals and even copies of goals set.

In addition to Head Start materials, state early learning guidelines were an important source of goals and objectives for many grantees, as were assessment tools and curricula.

Although a majority of grantees said they had the information needed to develop school readiness goals, some grantees said they would have liked more support. Grantees have a continuing need and desire for T/TA, because most planned to revise or update their goals, and some still had questions about what their goals should look like. In addition, there are ongoing T/TA needs related to effectively using and interpreting the child assessment data.

Implications for Policy and Technical Assistance

OHS and its T/TA network played a large role in educating and advising grantees as they set their school readiness goals. As grantees work to revise their goals, build capacity to analyze data related to goals, and increasingly use goals to inform program planning and practice, they will continue to rely on T/TA. Several ideas for future T/TA emerged from this study.

Further Guidance and T/TA on Developing Goals and Measures

Almost all grantees surveyed, and all those subsequently visited, had set school readiness goals, but even so, some felt uncertain about whether they had gotten it right. Grantees had questions about the ideal number of goals, how general or specific goals should be, whether they needed to set benchmarks, and how often they should revise their goals. Some of the visited grantees also mentioned wanting to connect data from their child assessment to other data—such as health records and attendance—to better understand patterns in child outcomes. They also expressed interest in broadening the goals to be inclusive of parent, family, and community engagement goals. Some grantees expressed interest in having a model to follow for such efforts, as well as assurance that these next steps were appropriate to take.

Additional T/TA on developing school readiness goals may be useful to help grantees better understand what is required per regulations and the options available for taking their school readiness plans to the next level. For example, a T/TA webinar or conference could be offered to discuss how to approach setting goals and developing action plans that integrate parent, family, and community engagement goals with child outcome goals. This type of assistance could address questions grantees raised about integrating or aligning their school readiness goals and with other program objectives, such as whether and how to make school readiness goals more inclusive of families.

In addition, grantees could benefit from assistance in identifying appropriate measures. Some grantees based their goals on the child assessment they were using without considering additional new measures outside of their curriculum or assessment tools. However, grantees mentioned that certain domains were harder to reliably measure with existing tools, and changing assessments or adding a new one (if a better one existed) was not an easy or viable solution in most cases. Early Head Start grantees in particular mentioned having more difficulty identifying school readiness goals measures. T/TA activities and resources could help identify appropriate measures.

Further T/TA on Data Analysis and Use

Another key implication of this research is the ongoing need for T/TA on data analysis and data use—and the importance of considering the needs of staff with different levels of expertise. Data managers, education managers, and others who work with school readiness goals data have a range of background knowledge, computer literacy skills and analytic skills. Training activities need to take into

account this diversity. It may be useful to develop different training sessions for staff using common assessment tools (e.g., Teaching Strategies GOLD) and those not using a common tool.

Additional online T/TA resources could be developed to provide teachers, home visitors, and other staff who collect and use data with ideas for how to better use data for planning and decisionmaking. Particular modules could focus on supporting home visitors in their role of meeting school readiness goals in working with families. Other modules could target teachers of different age groups.

More Tailored T/TA on Setting and Using Goals

A common theme from site visits was a desire to see how other grantees with similar characteristics to their programs—in terms of size, service options, age groups served—approached setting school readiness goals. Grantees wanted T/TA that better recognized their particular circumstances. For example, programs offering both Head Start and Early Head Start sought further guidance on the best approach to setting goals inclusive of the birth-through-5 continuum. Similarly, programs offering both center-based and home-based services that used different assessments across program options wanted help writing measurable goals that were applicable to children in both program options. Information and T/TA might also be tailored to variations in grantee technological and analytical capacity (i.e., to those with electronic data systems as compared to those with limited technology).

Different strategies may assist with targeting T/TA to individual needs. First, grantees could benefit from one-on-one assistance from their assigned T/TA specialist to focus on the issues they identified as problematic and to ensure assistance is directly relevant to the grantee's particular operational characteristics and approach. It is important to grantees that they can approach T/TA specialists without being concerned that their needs and requests might reflect poorly on the program or affect their standing. Second, grantees that participated in this study requested additional opportunities to network with other grantees in their area and/or grantees with similar characteristics. Some T/TA specialists already play an important role in facilitating these interactions by organizing conference calls, meetings, and electronic forums in which grantees share their school readiness goals and discuss their experiences and challenges with peers. Another possible strategy is to develop a toolkit to help guide grantees through the goal-setting process, with examples of goals for programs with different characteristics.

Support for Technology Investments and Data Systems

The last suggestion from grantees is less related to T/TA and more related to funding. Some grantees were concerned about the costly investment in online data systems and the infrastructure required to maintain it. Moreover, since Head Start programs are often in donated space with outdated infrastructure, upgrading the technological capacity of space can be problematic. Yet, programs with greater access to technology (i.e., individual laptops and iPads for ongoing data collection, Wi-Fi) and with staff who were trained to use technology appeared better positioned to use their data more effectively relative to their counterparts with limited technology. Moreover, some grantees thought they needed to enhance their technological infrastructure in order to store data over time and conduct the longitudinal analyses they hoped to do in the future. Another view was that because of the strong OHS interest in data collection and analysis, OHS should either create and provide an assessment tool and data system for all grantees to use or provide additional financial resources, such as technology enhancement grants, for grantees that need to upgrade their systems. Considering this or other steps to address the disparity in technological infrastructure and support would help promote more widespread use of data across all grantees.

Implications for Research

This research study describes how grantees initially responded to the school readiness mandate, with a focus on the process of setting goals and analyzing data. It also provides a first look at how grantees used school readiness goals and data to inform program planning and practice. However, many questions remain. The questions below suggest further research on school readiness goals and data and how goals and data can be used to improve program quality and child outcomes.

How Does Use of School Readiness Goals Change Over Time and Differ Across Grantees?

This study examined the initial process of setting school readiness goals, and how grantees are analyzing data in the early years of the requirements, among a diverse sample of grantees. Further research, conducted on a one-time or ongoing basis, could expand the available evidence by looking at these topics in a broader sample or over time. For example, it could be useful to monitor how and why programs revise their goals and measures over time, including whether this process is iterative. In

addition, examining school readiness goals using a larger sample of Head Start grantees would allow for the detection of differences in goals by grantee characteristics. Also, although the current study offers insights into how Early Head Start and American Indian/Alaskan Native grantees approach school readiness, additional research is needed to examine these and other grantee subgroups, including migrant and seasonal grantees, more closely.

How Do School Readiness Goals and Data Affect Programs?

It would be valuable to have a deeper understanding of how programs have been affected by the school readiness requirements. One might examine the relationship between the process used to set goals and program quality to explore whether particular approaches to school readiness goal implementation are associated with increases in service quality. Additional research could further explore whether there is any association between domain-specific goals and children's progress toward school readiness in those areas. Such a study might more closely examine the cyclical process identified in the conceptual framework for this study, including program improvement plans grantees adopt after evaluating the progress children are making. Future work might also examine the important links between school readiness goal setting and child outcomes, investigating for example, the effectiveness of targeted professional development.

How Should a Program Set and Use Benchmarks of Progress or Success?

Grantees are in need of guidance on best practices regarding benchmarks, such as the pros and cons of setting high benchmarks (that may be unattainable but set a clear message about high expectations) as compared with lower benchmarks (that may be attainable but may set expectations low). There also was variation in the use of quantitative benchmarks as compared to setting broad, descriptive expectations for general progress. Additional work is needed to determine how benchmarks influence the goal-setting process and how they help programs measure progress.

How Do Grantees' Technological and Analytical Capacity Influence Goal Setting?

The current study highlights technological and analytical capacity across grantees. Further work might explore how technology could aid program administrators in analyzing data, interpreting results, and

making decisions. Understanding more about linkages across data systems might also aid programs in setting goals specific to the populations they serve and tracking progress toward meeting those goals.

How Do Comprehensive Assessment Tools Influence Goal Setting?

This study revealed that comprehensive assessment tools have a sizable impact on the goals grantees set and how they track progress toward meeting them. Questions remain about the reliability of data collected by staff, the functionality of the tools, and whether grantees feel they have sufficient training to fully exploit the analytical capabilities of the tools. In addition, it is unclear whether assessment tools are emphasizing the most salient child outcomes and how grantees that do not have access to comprehensive tools might differ in their approach to goal setting.

Conclusion

This project provides a first look at how Head Start and Early Head Start grantees set school readiness goals, monitor progress toward meeting those goals, and use resulting data for planning and quality improvement. The study makes a valuable contribution to the early care and education field by describing in depth local grantees' various approaches to setting and using school readiness goals. The study's findings suggest that grantees have largely embraced the school readiness goals requirements. However, grantees report being at different stages in their ability to analyze data and use it for improving program quality. Further guidance and T/TA could help grantees use school readiness goals and data more effectively to enhance program quality. In addition, further research could take advantage of the variation among grantees to explore the goal-setting process in more depth and, ultimately, to determine which approaches to setting and using school readiness goals might be associated with higher-quality programs and improvements in child outcomes.

Appendix A. Weighting Methodology

As explained in the report, the sampling approach for the telephone survey involved stratifying the sample by grantee type [Head Start only (HS-only), Early Head Start only (EHS-only), and grantees serving both Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS)] and then selecting grantees within each primary stratum to ensure the sample included a sufficient number of cases arrayed across the nine independent program characteristics shown in table 2.2. Because the sample size was relatively small and the sampling goal was to guarantee grantees selected for the survey would include a sufficient level of representation on each of the characteristics, by program type, strata representing particular combinations of characteristics were purposively selected to achieve the desired mix of characteristics and then, within those strata, grantees were randomly selected for the study.

This approach means that the findings are based on a nonprobability sample. Generalizing from nonprobability samples to populations can be risky because of the potential for sample bias. The bias is minimal in this case, however, because the sample was drawn from a fully identified sampling frame; the primary difference between cases selected for the sample and those not selected was not expected to be associated with outcomes of interest;[29] and the approach helped to ensure the sample included representation from a broad spectrum of grantee characteristics. Therefore the research team assumed the approach did not introduce systematic sampling bias and developed and applied weights to the survey findings.

Raking, or poststratification, weights were developed and applied to adjust sample estimates to account for the disproportionate sampling of grantees with certain characteristics, as well as for survey nonresponse. The weights ensured the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matched the distribution of the sampling population on the following eight characteristics included in the raking algorithm:

- Type of head start grantee (EHS-only, HS-only, or HS/EHS),

- Program option (center based only or center based plus some other option),

- Program size (small, medium, or large),

- Presence of delegates,

- Organizational type (community-action agency, nonprofit, school, government or for-profit),

- Language of population served,

- Assessment tools (Creative Curriculum/Teaching Strategies GOLD, other commonly used assessments, or other screenings or less commonly used assessments), and

- Whether state kindergarten readiness assessments were conducted and reported statewide.

The report presents weighted survey findings as estimates that represent the population of the sampling frame, essentially Head Start and Early Head Start grantees operating in 2011–12, other than migrant and seasonal grantees, Alaskan Native/American Indian grantees, grantees operating in US territories, interim grantees, and grantees that had lost or relinquished their grant as of September 2013.

Unweighted as well as weighted estimates are provided in the full table of survey findings presented in appendix D. Although there is a variance around each estimate (and the variance estimate would need to be inflated to account for application of the raking weights), standard errors are not reported. The goal of the telephone survey was not to estimate mean values precisely, but to get a general sense of whether a substantial majority of grantees agreed with a particular statement or faced a particular challenge; the survey findings are used in this manner in the report.

Appendix B. Copy of Telephone Survey Instrument

School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning

Telephone Survey

45 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Hello, this is [*insert interviewer name]*, calling from the Urban Institute. May I please speak with [*insert respondent name*]? I am calling to conduct the telephone survey we discussed *(insert yesterday, a few days ago, last week, a few weeks ago, etc.).* Is this still a good time?

> *If no.* I understand. When would be a good time to reschedule? *(set new date/time).*

INFORMED CONSENT

Terrific. As I explained when we spoke before, The Urban Institute has received funding from the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to conduct this study. The purpose of the study is to learn from Head Start and Early Head Start programs about their experiences setting school readiness goals and their experiences using information about school readiness to inform program planning. Before I begin my questions, I want to explain our study procedures and your rights as a participant.

The information you share in this telephone survey will be kept private. That means your individual answers will not be shared with anyone outside the research staff working on the study, except as required by child abuse and neglect reporting law. When we report our findings, information from all people we interview will be put together and presented so that no individual's answers can be identified. Also, we will not use your name, the name of your program, your location or any other identifying information in any of our reports.

We especially want to make sure that you freely consent to participate in this phone survey and that, except for losing the opportunity to share your views, you understand there won't be any consequences to you or your program if you choose not to participate or not to answer some of the survey questions. Do you consent to participate in the telephone survey?

    1   Yes *(note time)*
    2   No *(If no, address concerns and explore possibility of participation)*

Because this is a government-sponsored research project, I have to read the following statement to comply with the Paperwork Reduction Act. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 45 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing the instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and compiling and reviewing the collection of information. This information collection is voluntary. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this study is OMB/PRA 0970-0438. You can send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to ACF. Would you like that address? [Reports Clearance Officer (Attn: OMB/PRA 0970-0438) Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W. Washington, DC 20447.]

Okay. The survey will last about 45 minutes, though if something urgent comes up while we are talking, please let me know and I can wait or we can continue at another time. Most of my questions just require a very short answer but periodically I will have some questions for you that are more open-ended. Before we get started, do you have any questions about the Urban Institute or about the study?

(Note and address respondent questions)

Pre-Interview Questions: *INTERVIEWER: DO NOT ASK. FILL IN FROM INFORMATION PROVIDED TO YOU.*
   P1. Which of the following programs does the respondent's include?*(mark all that apply)*
   1. Head Start
   2. Early Head Start

P2. Is the Head Start/Early Head Start proram a part of a multi-purpose agency?
   1. Yes
   2. No (skip to 4)

P3. What is this multi-purpose agency called? *(open response)*

P4. Which of the following is the respondent's primary program? *(Note: if the respondent has only one program, select that as the primary program)*
   1. Head Start
   2. Early Head Start

P5. What curriculum/curricula does the respondent's primary program use? *(open response)*
P6. What child assessment tools does the respondent's primary program use? *(open response)*

PART A: PROGRAM/RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

I want to start by confirming just a few things about your program.

A1.   *If P1 doesn't equal 1, skip to A2. Otherwise ask:* What are the ages of the children you serve with Head Start funding *(mark all that apply)*?

   0   Infants under 12 months old
   1   One-year olds
   2   Two-year olds
   3   Three-year olds
   4   Four-year olds
   5   Five-year olds
   .d   Don't know
   .r   Refused

A2.   *If P1 doesn't equal 2, skip to A4. Otherwise ask:* What are the ages of the children you serve with Early Head Start funding *(mark all that apply)*?

        0   Infants under 12 months old
        1   One-year olds
        2   Two-year olds
        3   Three-year olds
        4   Four-year olds
        5   Five-year olds
        .d   Don't know
        .r   Refused

A3.   Do you serve any pregnant women in your Early Head Start program?

        0   No
        1   Yes
        .d   Don't know
        .r   Refused

A4.   *If P1 doesn't equal 1, skip to A5. Otherwise ask:* What Head Start program options do you offer? *(mark all that apply)*

        1   Center-based
        2   Home-based
        3   Combination
        4   Family child care
        5   Local design *(describe)* _____
        6   Other *(specify)* _____
        .d   Don't know
        .r   Refused

A5.   *If P1 doesn't equal 2, skip to A6. Otherwise ask:* What Early Head Start program options do you offer? *(mark all that apply)*

        1   Center-based
        2   Home-based
        3   Combination
        4   Family child care
        5   Local design *(describe)* _____
        6   Other *(specify)* _____
        .d   Don't know
        .r   Refused

A6.   We pulled a little bit of information from your 2012 PIR data. They indicate that your *(pipe from P4)* program uses the *(pipe from P5)* Is that still correct?

        0   No

1   Yes *(goto A6b)*
.d   Don't know (go to A7)
.r   Refused (go to A7)

A6a.   What curriculum or combinations of curricula are you using?

No response categories, open ended.

A6b.   Do you use any other curricula?

No response categories, open ended.

A7.   And the 2012 PIR data indicate that your *pipe from P4]* program uses the *(pipe from P6).* Is that still correct?

0   No
1   Yes *(goto A7b)*
.d   Don't know (go to A8)
.r   Refused (go to A8)

A7a.   What child assessment tools are you using?

No response categories, open ended.

A7b.   Do you use any other child assessment tools?

No response categories, open ended.

A8.   What is your official job title?

No response categories, open ended.

A9.   How long have you been in this position?

[0-12]   Months
[0-70]   Years
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

A10.   How long, altogether, have you worked with Head Start or Early Head Start programs?

[0-12]   Months
 [0-70]   Years
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

PART B: SETTING SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

B1.   Now I'd like to confirm our understanding of where you are in the process of establishing your school readiness goals. Has your agency already established goals, are you in the process of establishing them, or have you not yet started establishing your school readiness goals?

    1   Already established goals
    2   In the process of establishing
    3   Not yet started
    .d   Don't know
    .r   Refused

B2.   We are also interested in understanding whether programs are generally starting from the ground up in developing school readiness goals as compared to adapting existing goals to meet the requirement. When you think about your process, did you largely start *(or will largely start)* from the ground up, did you modify goals already in place for your program, or did you modify goals from another source?

    Probe if necessary: If you had to describe your process one of those ways, would you say you largely worked from the ground up, modified goals already in place in your program, or modified goals from another source?

    1   Started from the ground up
    2   Modified goals already in place for program
    3   Modified goals from another source
    .d   Don't know
    .r   Refused

    B2a.   What was the source of the goals you modified?

    No response categories, open ended.

B3.   *If B1=2 or B1=3 or B1=.d or B1=.r, skip to B4, otherwise ask:* In what month and year did you finalize your school readiness goals?
    Probe if necessary: An approximate date is fine.
    Probe if necessary: So in about *[fill month, fill year]*?

    0-12   Month
    1970-2013   Year
    .d   Don't know
    .r   Refused

B4.   *If P1=1 and P1=2, skip to B6, otherwise ask:* When you set your school readiness goals, is (was) it one process for both your Head Start and your Early Head programs or is (was) there a separate process for each?
    Probe if necessary: If you're not sure, what do you think?

    1   One process for both

2   Separate process for each
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

B5.   Are the goals for Early Head Start largely the same as for Head Start or are they largely different?

1   Largely the same
2   Largely different
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

If B4=1 and B5=1, goto B6, otherwise say: For the survey questions today, we would like you to answer about your school readiness goals for your *[pipe from P4]*

B6.   Now we would like to get your opinions about the requirement to set school readiness goals. I am going to read a list of statements. On a scale of 1-5 please tell me if you how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. 1 would mean you strongly disagree and 5 would mean you strongly agree. Here is the first statement.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Having school readiness goals is/will be useful for our program.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
b. We did not have enough time to set our goals.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
c. We understand the Office of Head Start's requirements on school readiness goals.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
d. We have/had the information we needed to support our school readiness goal setting process.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
e. It was/will be easy to set our goals.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
f. Setting school readiness goals was a good use of our time.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
g. We could have used/could use more support in setting our goals.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r

B6a.   *If B6g = 1, 2,or 3, goto B7, otherwise ask:* What kind of additional support would have been useful?

No response categories, open ended.

B7.   Let's talk about the individuals and groups involved in deciding on your school readiness goals. First I want to find out who supervised the process and who managed the day-to-day work of setting the

goals. Who in your agency was primarily responsible for providing overall direction and supervision for the goal-setting process?

1   Head Start/Early Head Start Program Director
2   Assistant Program Director
3   Education Coordinator
4   Agency Board of Directors
5   Policy Council
6   Other (specify) _____
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

B8.   Who in your agency was primarily responsible for managing the day-to-day work of setting the goals?

Probe if necessary: Who was the one person most responsible for managing the day-to-day work of setting the goals?

1   Head Start/Early Head Start Program Director
2   Assistant Program Director
3   Education Coordinator
4   Consultant
5   Other (specify) _____
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

B9.   Did you establish a special committee to help with the school readiness goal-setting process?

0   No *(go to B10)*
1   Yes
.d   Don't know (go to B10)
.r   Refused (go to B10)

B9a.   Who was represented on that committee? *(mark all that apply)*

1   Head Start/Early Head Start Program Directors/Assistant Directors
2   Program Coordinators or Managers (Education, Mental Health, etc.)
3   Center or Site Directors/Managers
4   Classroom Staff/Home Visitors
5   Family Service Workers
6   Policy Council Members
7   Parents
8   Local Education Agencies
9   Community Stakeholders
10   External Consultant
11   Agency Governing Body Representative
12   Other *(specify)* _____

B10. Now we would like to know more about how involved different stakeholders were in deciding on your programs' school readiness goals. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not involved at all, and 5 being very heavily involved, how involved was/were the following people in deciding on your program's school readiness goals?

	NOT AT ALL INVOLVED				VERY HEAVILY INVOLVED	NOT APPLI-CABLE	DON'T KNOW	REFU SED
a. Head Start *(Early Head Start)* Program Directors and Assistant Directors?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
b. *If P2=1:* The Director of *(pipe from P3: organization name)*?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
c. Your Education Coordinator or Manager?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
d. Your Family Services Coordinator or Manager?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
e. Other Coordinators such as Health, Nutrition, Disabilities, and Mental Health?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
f. Center Directors or Site Managers?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
g. Classroom Staff	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
h. Home Visitors?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
h. Family Service Workers?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
i. Parents?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
j. The Policy Council?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
k. Your Governing Body or Board of Directors?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
l. Local education agencies or schools?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
m. Community partners?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
n. External consultants?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r

B11. Was anybody else I haven't mentioned involved in deciding on your program's school readiness goals?

0   No *(go to B13)*
1   Yes
.d   Don't know (go to B13)
.r   Refused (go to B13)

B12. Who else was involved and, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all involved and 5 is very heavily involved, how involved were they?

B11 a-e. Who else was involved?	NOT AT ALL INVOLVED	VERY HEAVILY INVOLVED	NOT APPLI-CABLE	DON'T KNOW	REFUSE D

B11a. *(Specify)_____* B12a. On a scale of 1-5, how involved was *(fill)* in deciding on your goals?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
B11b. *(Specify)_____* B12b. On a scale of 1-5, how involved was *(fill)* in deciding on your goals?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
B11c. *(Specify)_____* B12c. On a scale of 1-5, how involved was *(fill)* in deciding on your goals?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
B11d. *(Specify)_____* B12d. On a scale of 1-5, how involved was *(fill)* in deciding on your goals?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r
B11e. *(Specify)_____* B12e. On a scale of 1-5, how involved was *(fill)* in deciding on your goals?	1	2	3	4	5	.n	.d	.r

B12. *(On a scale of 1-5…shown in table above, repeated here to maintain question numbering)*

B13. Does your program receive funds from any other sources that impose requirements you had to consider when setting your school readiness goals?

0   No *(go to B14)*
1   Yes
.d   Don't know (go to B14)
.r   Refused (go to B14)
B13a.   Please tell me a little bit about those funding sources and requirements.

No response categories, open-ended.

B14. After the goals were written, was there a formal process for approving the goals?

0   No
1   Yes
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

B14a. *If yes,* who formally approved the goals? *(mark all that apply)*

	NO	YES	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Organization Director	0	1	.d	.r
b. Head Start/Early Head Start Director	0	1	.d	.r
c. Policy Council	0	1	.d	.r
d. Board of Directors or Governing Body	0	1	.d	.r
e. Other (specify) _____	0	1	.d	.r

B15.   Of all the groups we discussed as part of the school readiness goal setting process, which ones provided the most useful input and why?

Optional probe: Is there anyone that you wish had been more involved in the process of setting your programs school readiness goals? If yes, Can you tell me a little bit more about why and how you wish they had been more involved?

No response categories… open ended.

B16.   When you were developing your school readiness goals, what kinds of written resources, training, and technical assistance, if any, did you turn to for help or information?

Probe if not mentioned: Did you rely on any particular written information or publications?
Probe if not mentioned: Did you rely on any local technical assistance providers?
Probe if not mentioned: Did you rely on any technical assistance or resources from the national Head Start TA Centers?

No response categories… open ended

B17.   Of all the resources and assistance we just discussed, which were the most useful and why?

No response categories… open ended.

B18.   When you think about the kinds of considerations that affected the specific goals you chose, which were most important considerations?

No response categories… open ended.

B19.   The last thing I want to discuss before we change topics is possible challenges in the goal-setting process. Based on your experience, would you say that *the following items* have been a big challenge, a medium challenge, a small challenge, or not a challenge at all?

a.	Finding time for the process?	1	Big Challenge	4	Not at all
		2	Medium	.d	Don't know
		3	Small	.r	Refused
b.	How about getting staff to engage in the goal setting process? Has that been a big, medium, small or not a challenge at all?	1	Big Challenge	4	Not at all
		2	Medium	.d	Don't know
		3	Small	.r	Refused
c.	Getting parents to engage in the process?	1	Big Challenge	4	Not at all
		2	Medium	.d	Don't know
		3	Small	.r	Refused
d.	Building understanding about how the goals would help your program?	1	Big Challenge	4	Not at all
		2	Medium	.d	Don't know
		3	Small	.r	Refused
e.	Getting enough information about Office of Head Start expectations about how to meet the requirement?	1	Big Challenge	4	Not at all
		2	Medium	.d	Don't know
		3	Small	.r	Refused

f.	Getting enough data or information about the needs of children and families in the communities you serve?	1	Big Challenge	4	Not at all
		2	Medium	.d	Don't know
		3	Small	.r	Refused
g.	(For EHS programs) Setting useful goals for children under age 3?	1	Big Challenge	4	Not at all
		2	Medium	.d	Don't know
		3	Small	.r	Refused
h.	Setting goals that are respectful of child and family diversity?	1	Big Challenge	4	Not at all
		2	Medium	.d	Don't know
		3	Small	.r	Refused
i.	Fitting the goals into your existing goals or planning process?	1	Big Challenge	4	Not at all
		2	Medium	.d	Don't know
		3	Small	.r	Refused

B20. Are there any other challenges that you encountered that you want to mention?

No response categories… open ended.

PART C: TRACKING PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS

Now let's talk about how you (will) track progress toward your goals, communicate about progress, and use that information to support ongoing program management, planning, and improvement.

C1. *If B1=1 or B1=2, otherwise skip to C2:* Has your program identified specific measures that will help you observe progress toward meeting your goals?

0   No *(skip to C2)*
1   Yes
.d   Don't know (skip to C2)
.r   Refused (skip to C2)

C1a. Thinking across your whole list of goals, for what share of them have you identified measures that will help you track progress? Would you say, all, most, some, or none?
Probe if needed: An estimate is fine.
1.   All
2.   Most
3.   Some
4.   None
5.   Don't know
6.   Refused

C2. Now I am going to read a list of statements that describe the ways that some Head Start and Early Head Start programs feel about their capacity to collect, analyze, and use data and information related to their school readiness goals. On a scale of 1-5 please tell me if you how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. 1 would mean you strongly disagree and 5 would mean you strongly agree.

		STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a.	We have the technology we need to manage and analyze data and information.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
b.	Our staff are knowledgeable about how to collect valid, reliable data.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
c.	need help defining the questions we want to answer with data.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
d.	Our staff are knowledgeable about how to interpret data reports.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r
e.	We do not have enough staff to collect the data or information we need.	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r

C3.   Is there someone in your organization whose job title is data manager, data analyst, evaluation manager or something similar?

0   No *(skip to c4)*
1   Yes
.d   Don't know (skip to C4)
.r   Refused (skip to C4)

C3a.   What is that person's title and what are their key responsibilities?

No response categories… open ended.

C4.   Have you hired or do you have plans to hire additional staff to collect and manage data related to the school readiness goal requirement?

0   No
1   Yes, have hired
2   Yes, plan to hire
3   Yes, both have hired and have plans to further hire
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

C5.   As a result of the goal requirement, have you made any improvements to your technological infrastructure?

0   No
1   Yes
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

C6.   How frequently do you or your program staff produce and look at aggregate data? Aggregate data refers to groups of children rather than individuals. Would you say daily, weekly, monthly, a few times a year, once a year, or never?

1   Daily
2   Weekly
3   Monthly
4   A few times a year
5   Once a year
6   Never
7   Other *(specify)* _____
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

C7.   *If C6=6, skip to C14. Otherwise, ask:* Is this aggregate information used by managers, by teachers, or both?

1   Only by managers
2   Only by teachers
3   Both
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

C8.   *If C7 =2 or .d or .r, skip to C9. Otherwise ask:* Please give me some examples of how managers use aggregate information about groups of children.

Open ended. No response categories.

C9.   *If C7 =1 .d or .r, skip to C10. Otherwise ask:* Please give me some examples of how teachers use aggregate information about groups of children.

Open ended. No response categories.

C10.   How often if ever, is aggregate information about groups of children shared with parents? Would you say never, once a year, a few times a year, or monthly?

1   Never
2   Once a year
3   A few times a year
4   Monthly
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

C11.   How often if ever, is aggregate information about groups of children shared with your Policy Council? *If necessary,* Would you say never, once a year, a few times a year, or monthly?

1   Never
2   Once a year
3   A few times a year
4   Monthly
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

C12.   How often if ever, is aggregate information about groups of children shared with your Board of Directors or Governing Body? Would you say monthly, a few times a year, once a year, or never?

1   Never
2   Once a year
3   A few times a year
4   Monthly
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

C13.   When you look at aggregate data, is it for one point in time, over the course of a program year, or across different program years? *(Mark all that apply.)*

1   One point in time
2   Over the course of a program year
3   Across different program years
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

C14.   Based on your experience, would you say that the following items have been a big challenge, a medium challenge, a small challenge, or not a challenge at all?

a. Analyzing data related to school readiness goals?	1 Big Challenge 2 Medium 3 Small 4 Not at all	.d Don't know .r Refused	
b. How about finding measures that align with your school readiness goals? Has that been a big, medium, small or not a challenge at all?	1 Big Challenge 2 Medium 3 Small 4 Not at all	.d Don't know .r Refused	
c. Interpreting data to understand children's progress ?	1 Big Challenge 2 Medium 3 Small 4 Not at all	.d Don't know .r Refused	
d. Making sure data account for the circumstances of certain groups of children such as dual-language learners or children with special needs?	1 Big Challenge 2 Medium 3 Small 4 Not at all	.d Don't know .r Refused	

PART D: USING SCHOOL-READINESS GOALS AND RELATED MEASURES FOR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT, PLANNING, AND IMPROVEMENT

Now we would like to talk about whether and how you are going to put the school readiness goals into action in your program.

D1.   Some programs require all staff to receive formal training on school readiness goals. Other programs are getting the word about school readiness goals out to staff in more informal ways. Which of those better describes your program's approach?

1   Formal goal training
2   Informal information sharing
3   Both *(response category not offered)*
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

D2.   School readiness goals and related information may be useful in some aspects of program planning and operations, and not as useful in others. I am going to read a list of planning activities. For each, please tell me how useful your school readiness goals will be. Please use a scale of 1-5, with one meaning the goals will not be useful at all and a five meaning the goals will be extremely useful. How useful will the school readiness goals and related data be for:

	NOT AT ALL USEFUL			EXTREMELY USEFUL		DON'T KNOW	REFUSED	N/A
a. Program-wide strategic planning?	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r	
b. Program budgeting?	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r	
c. Decisions made by the policy council?	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r	
d. Staff professional development?	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r	
e. Day-to-day program management?								
e. Teacher planning for daily classroom activities? *(if applicable)*	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r	
f. Teacher's work with individual children? *(if applicable)*	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r	
g. Home-visitor's work with individual children?	1	2	3	4	5	.d	.r	

D3.   Are there any other aspects of your process for program planning, management, or operations for which the school readiness goals will be extremely useful?

0   No *(skip to D4)*
1   Yes
.d   Don't know (skip to D4)
.r   Refused (skip to D4)

D3a.   What aspects are you thinking about? *(specify)* _____

D4.   How often do you think your program will revise your goals? Would you say, never, every few years, every year, or throughout the course of each year?

>   1   Never (skip to E1)
>   2   Every few years
>   3   Every year
>   4   Throughout the course of each year
>   .d Don't know
>   .r Refused

D5.   Please tell me a little bit about what that process of revising your goals will look like.

>   *Open ended. No response categories.*

PART E: REPORTING PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS

The last category of things we would like to talk about are your plans for reporting overall progress toward your school readiness goals. *If necessary:* Even if you are still in the process of figuring out how you are going to report progress, please try to answer my questions with information about how you think your plans will evolve.

E1.   Who will be responsible for compiling the information you share to report overall progress on your goals? *(mark all that apply)*

>   1   Head Start/Early Head Start Director
>   2   Assistant Head Start Directors/Early Head Start Directors
>   3   Data Manager
>   4   Evaluation Manager
>   5   Consultant
>   6   Education Coordinator
>   7   Parent Involvement Coordinator
>   8   Health, Nutrition, Disabilities, or Mental Health or other Coordinators
>   9   Other *(specify)* _____
>   .d Don't know
>   .r Refused

E2.   Are you planning to communicate progress toward your goals through written reports, presentations, both, or neither?

>   1   Written reports
>   2   Presentations
>   3   Both
>   4   Neither
>   .d Don't know
>   .r Refused

E2a.   *Ask if E2=1 or E2=3, otherwise skip to E2c:* Will you have reports that are focused specifically on your school readiness goals or will you be incorporating information about progress toward goals into reports covering a broader range of topics?

   1   Reports focused specifically on goals
   2   Reports with broader topics
   3   Both
   .d   Don't know
   .r   Refused

E2b.   How frequently will you produce written information about progress toward your program's school readiness goals? Would you say annually, a few times a year, or monthly?

   1   Annually
   2   A few times a year
   3   Monthly
   .d   Don't know
   .r   Refused

E2c.   *Ask if E2=2 or E2=3, otherwise skip to E3:* How frequently do you intend to conduct presentations about overall progress toward your school readiness goals? Would you say annually, a few times a year, or monthly?

   1   Annually
   2   A few times a year
   3   Monthly
   .d   Don't know
   .r   Refused

E3.   Please tell me a little bit about the main topics that you think you will cover when you report overall progress toward your school readiness goals?

   No response categories… open ended.

E4.   Please tell me a little bit about who, inside and outside your organization, will receive information about your program's overall progress on school readiness goals?

   Probe, if necessary: Is there anyone else to whom you will report overall progress on your goals?

   No response categories… open ended.

PART F: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND CONCLUSION

We are almost finished. I have just a few questions about your background.

F1.   What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1   High School *(skip to F3)*
2   Some College *(skip to F3)*
3   Associate Degree
4   Bachelor Degree
5   Master's Degree
6   Ph.D.
7   Other *(specify)* _____
.d   Don't know (skip to F3)
.r   Refused (skip to F3)

F2.   In what field or fields do you have a degree?

No response categories… open ended.

F3.   How many staff in your program directly report to you?

Probe, if necessary: An approximate number is fine.

[0-100]
.d   Don't know
.r   Refused

F4.   Those are all of my questions for the survey. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your program's experience with setting and using school readiness goals?

No response categories… open ended.

F5.   At the end of this year and early next year, we will also be visiting a subset of programs that complete the telephone survey. The purpose of those visits will be to hear the views of additional program staff, parents and other stakeholders on the types of topics we discussed today and to give you an opportunity to offer more of your opinions on these issues. These follow-up interviews will be more open-ended in nature than the questions I had today. May I have your permission for someone from our study team to contact you later to discuss the possibility of your program's participation in a site visit?

0   No *(go to FAQ to address questions about participation in site visit)*
1   Yes (Thank you. We are only visiting about 12 so there is a possibility we may not contact you about a follow-up visit).

F6.   Thank you very much for your time today. Can you please confirm the spelling of your name and the address to which we should send the $25 check as a token of appreciation for your participation in the survey? *(Correct information on hard copy of check request, rather than entering into data system).*

We appreciate your assistance with the survey. I hope you have a good *(weekend, afternoon, day, etc.)*

Appendix C. Copy of Site Visit and AIAN Interview Discussion Guides

Appendix C-1

Site Visit Protocol

Interview Guide for Program Directors and Managers

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. I'm [INTERVIEWER NAME] and this is my colleague [ASSISTANT NAME], and we're researchers from the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization in Washington, DC. Our discussion today builds on the telephone survey that [you/your program] completed for us a couple months ago.

As we may have mentioned, as part of this study, we are visiting 12 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees from across the country.

Our goal is to learn about grantees' experiences with setting school readiness goals and their opinions towards the school readiness goals requirement, but we are <u>not</u> evaluating whether programs are meeting the requirement or not. The purpose of the study is to inform the Office of Head Start about how Head Start programs are implementing this requirement and what their strengths and needs are.

During our visit to your program, we will be meeting with program leaders, staff, parents, and other key stakeholders to get different perspectives on your program and its goals.

Our meeting with you today will last about 90 minutes. The structure will be rather open-ended, meaning we have a list of specific questions to cover but we welcome any responses you may have.

INFORMED CONSENT

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to give you a copy of a consent form that describes our study procedures and your rights as a participant. If you agree to the study procedures, I'll ask you to sign and date your copy.

[NOTES TO FACILITATORS: Give copy of consent form to participant. Participant must sign and return one copy and may keep the second copy.]

- I'll point out that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.
- Everyone who works on this study has signed a *Staff Confidentiality Pledge* prohibiting disclosure of anything you say during the interview that would allow someone outside the research team, including government staff and officials, to identify you. The only exception is a researcher may be required by law to report suspicion of immediate harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
- Your name and other identifying information, such as the program's name and specific location, will be removed from the data to protect your privacy.
- We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. With your permission, we will audio record the session and take notes (written and/or on a laptop computer). Those notes will not include your name. The recording will serve as a back-up tool to ensure we capture all your comments in as close to your words as possible. Once the project is complete, all recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment, please let us know and we will do so.

Do you have any questions about the study procedures?

[If anyone objects to recording the discussion, the researcher who is not leading the interview will need to take thorough notes.]

PROTOCOL

[CONSTRUCT: Program context. Leadership background and experience.]

1. To start, would you please tell us your job title, how long you've worked in this position, any past positions you've held, and a brief description of your primary role and responsibilities in the program.
2. (If respondent was not surveyed) What is your educational background?

[CONSTRUCT: Program context. Child and family characteristics/needs.]

3. Tell us a little about your program's history and structure.
    a) How many years have you been offering Head Start (and Early Head Start)?
    b) Do you offer any other early childhood programs or services? Tell us about how those programs operate and any funding you receive.
    c) Please describe any community partnerships you have.

4. Tell us more about this community and the children and families that you serve.
    a) What are some of the greatest strengths of this community?
    b) What are some of the greatest needs that you see in this community?
    c) <u>IF HS/EHS:</u> Are the needs and strengths similar in the Head Start and Early Head Start components of your program? How, if at all, are they different?

[CONSTRUCT: Perspectives towards school readiness goals mandate.]

5. During the telephone survey, we asked some questions about your program's process of developing and setting school readiness goals. I'd like to ask you some more questions about that process. But to start, can you tell me how you first heard about the new requirement of setting school readiness goals?
    a) What did you think of the requirement when you first heard about it?
    b) Did your program already have school readiness goals or something similar, or was this idea new to you? *(Probe for whether the requirement aligns with what they were already doing or if it was new or different.)*

[CONSTRUCT: Steps in goal setting process.]

6. Once you learned of the school readiness goals requirement, what steps did you take to establish your program's goals?

   a) How did you or others decide who should lead the goal-setting effort? Why?

   b) What role did you have?
   (Probe for who wrote the actual goals, who researched what was required, who communicated with staff and parents, etc.)

   c) Who else was involved among the staff?

   d) How were others involved? *(Probe for role of and communication with parents, policy council, governing body, local education agency, local partners, consultants, etc.)*

   e) Was input from others sought early in the process, or as final decisions were being made, or when?

   f) What kind of input was sought/given?

   g) From your perspective, was everyone involved in the process who needed to be to make it successful? Or was someone missing or not as involved as you would have liked?

   h) Can you tell me about how you went from setting the larger goals to deciding the objectives and measures you'd use for each goal? *(Reference copy of goals documents)*

   i) *(If program has not yet finalized goals)* When do you anticipate finalizing your goals?

      o What steps do you need to take before you can finalize the goals?

   j) <u>*IF HS/EHS GRANTEE*</u>: How was the process the same or different for setting goals (and objectives) for preschool children and for infants and toddlers?

      o What made you decide to have a [single set of goals for 0-5 / different sets of goals for Head Start and Early Head Start]?

      (Probe depending on if goals are similar or different for HS and EHS to understand both the process and the outcome, i.e., the goals selected.)

[CONSTRUCT: Key factors in goal setting process.]

7. We want to learn more about the things that shape the actual goals and objectives selected by Head Start programs. As you think about your goals, what kinds of things did you consider when choosing your goals and objectives?

Did you think about [FILL IN] when you were setting your goals? Why or why not?

(Probe for factors listed in our conceptual model:
- *Head Start's Child Development and Early Learning Framework, Performance Standards, guidance, & materials from the Head Start National TA Centers*
- *Program Characteristics: size, auspice, funding, governance, service delivery model, leadership, staff, values, theory of change, curricula*
- *Child & Family Characteristics: ages, needs, languages, culture & beliefs*
- *Community Context: State early learning guidelines, local education agencies and kindergarten requirements, community stakeholders, partners, resources)*
- *(IF HS/EHS: Probe for differences in factors by age group)*

8. How do the school readiness goals you set fit into other planning and improvement efforts going on in your program? *(e.g., state school readiness assessment framework, QRIS initiatives, accreditation process)*

(Probe for whether or not the requirement aligns with what program was already doing or if this was a novel task.)

[CONSTRUCT: Guidance and TA from Head Start]

9. Did you use any information provided by the Office of Head Start, the national Head Start technical assistance centers, or your State TA providers during the process of setting your school readiness goals? Tell us about the information you used and how you used it.
    a) How did you get the information: through the web, printed materials, conference calls, workshops or conferences?
    b) What information was most useful? Why?
    c) What information was not very useful? Why?
    d) How timely was the information you received?
    e) What other information or support would have been useful to you?

[CONSTRUCT: Use of non-Head Start resources in goal-setting]

10. What other resources did you use as you were setting your goals?
(Examples: materials from professional organizations, the local school system, and curriculum publisher.)
   a) How did you get the information: through the web, printed materials, conference calls, workshops or conferences?
   b) What information was most useful? Why?

[CONSTRUCT: Facilitators in goal setting process.]

11. Looking back, what would you say helped move along the whole process of setting school readiness goals?

(Probe: What things made the process easier for you? For example, your past experiences setting program goals, parental engagement, good communication with LEA, good T/TA)

[CONSTRUCT: Barriers in goal setting process.]

12. Were there particular challenges or barriers when setting goals?
   a) What concerns, if any, did people have during this process?
   b) How were these issues resolved?

   (Probe: For example, getting the right mix of people to provide input, lack of understanding of new requirements, lack of time and resources to plan, disagreement regarding goals, lack of T/TA)

[CONSTRUCT: Infusing goals into practice and daily operations]

13. So we've talked a lot about how you set the goals. What did you do with the goals after you set them?

   a) Did you tell people about your goals? Who did you tell?

   (Probe if and how any information was shared with program managers and coordinators, teachers, family service workers, home visitors, parents, policy council, governing body, community partners, and local education agency.)

b) Did you provide information to teachers and other direct service staff to help them understand what the goals mean for their work? How did you communicate this information?

c) Are there any other steps you plan to take with these goals? *(Probe if goals have been or will be turned into an action plan.)*

d) *[If program has or is developing an action plan]* What does your action plan include?

    i. How did/will you prioritize what should go in the plan?

    ii. Where are you in the process of implementing the plan?

    iii. Did you use any information provided by the Office of Head Start, the national Head Start technical assistance centers, or your State TA providers on how to turn the goals into an action plan? Tell us about the information you used and how you used it.
- How did you get the information: through the web, printed materials, conference calls, workshops or conferences?
- What information was most useful? Why?
- What information was not very useful? Why?
- What other information would be useful to you?

14. Thinking back to before you had school readiness goals and now, how, if at all, has your program changed?

[CONSTRUCT: Measuring progress towards goals]

15. Next, I'd like to discuss the process you follow to collect data to measure progress towards goals.
   a) What kinds of measures or assessment tools do staff use to assess school readiness? Were the measures selected before or after you set your goals?
   b) Why were *these* measures selected in particular, versus others that might be available to Head Start programs? *(Probe measures for DLLs)*
   c) What kind of data system do you use to store this information?

16. Did your staff receive training in how to use these measures and collect the data?
   a) Who received training?
   b) What did the training involve? *(Probe for whether training was a one-time event or repeated to reinforce skills; any plans to reinforce training.)*

c) Do you feel the training was sufficient? Why or why not?

17. How have these measures been working out for you? Are there any goals (or developmental domains) for which you feel you don't have the <u>right</u> measure or <u>enough</u> measures to really understand whether you're reaching the goal (or that children are developing)?

18. Are there populations or groups of children for whom you feel that the measures are not working well? For which populations or groups?

[CONSTRUCT: Data use]

19. Once these data are collected, what do you do with the data?

    (Probe: Do you submit it to someone else, do you analyze it yourself, do you save it in a file for safekeeping and possible analysis later, or something else?)

    a) Who runs the analyses?
        i. What kind of training and skills does that person have? From your perspective, does that person have all the training and skills needed to do that job?
        ii. Does this person have other pressing responsibilities that limit his/her ability to produce the data frequently enough or in a fashion that would be useful?

    b) What types of data analyses or reports do you see/run?
        i. Do you aggregate the data at the classroom/group level? At the center level? At the program level?
        ii. Do you aggregate the data to compare different groups of children? What groups? *(Probe for child characteristics, such age, race/ethnicity, language, or gender.)*
        iii. Do you aggregate the data by teacher or home visitor for the purpose of training and supervision?
        iv. Do you compare school readiness data across different years?
        v. What types of analyses do you run for each child?

    c) What kinds of things do you look for as you review the information?

    d) How do you determine whether children are making progress toward the goals you've set? How do you know if there has been "enough" growth?

(Probes: look at school readiness growth in individual children over time, look at growth toward specific skills, compare scores to norms, look at aggregated scores over time within the program)

20. Have you ever had difficulty interpreting the data (or the information in the data reports you received)?
    a) What was challenging about it?
    b) What would have made it easier for you to understand?
    c) Is there any information you would like to get from the data but can't get? What information?

21. Who else has access to the school readiness data? *(Probe who has access to data that they can analyze versus data reports generated by others)*

[CONSTRUCT: Communication regarding progress]

22. What, if any, information do you share with [FILL IN FROM LIST] regarding progress towards school readiness goals? *(Probe for how, when, and the type of information shared. For staff, whether data are broken down into groups that individual staff members work with, e.g., classes, caseloads.)*
    a) Staff who work directly with children or families
    b) the staff who you supervise *(if different from a)*
    c) the policy council
    d) parents
    e) the governing body/Board of Directors
    f) the local education agency
    g) other program partners

[CONSTRUCT: Data-driven decision-making]

23. Have the results you've seen from school readiness assessments ever led you to make changes to the program and to the work you (or your staff) do?

    a) Can you provide a few examples of changes you've made?
    (Probe for changes to professional development, curriculum & instruction, assessments, services delivered, program philosophy, etc.)
    b) Have these changes been helpful?
    c) Are there other changes you would like to see?

24. Have you ever made changes to your school readiness goals based on the results of assessments? What changes did you make? When did that occur?

[CONSTRUCT: Prioritization of goals]

25. Looking back, has the program emphasized certain school readiness goals more than others?
    a) Why do you think that's the case?
    b) *IF HS/EHS*: Are priorities similar for infants and toddlers as for preschoolers?

[CONSTRUCT: Challenges to meeting mandate]

26. What's been the most challenging for you and your program during this whole process of setting goals, measuring progress towards goals, and using goals to inform your planning?

    (Probe: For example, getting staff buy-in, lack of understanding of new requirements, lack of time and resources to plan, disagreement regarding goals, lack of T/TA)

[CONSTRUCT: Supports needed to fully meet mandate]

27. What kinds of resources or support would you and your staff need to overcome these challenges? (If no challenges, then what is needed to better measure progress towards goals and use goals for planning?)
    (Probe types of T/TA and at what level)

[CONSTRUCT: Usefulness of school readiness goals requirement]

28. Overall, do you think that the school readiness goals requirement has been useful for your program? Why or why not?

29. We'd be interested in seeing copies of example data reports that you have available so we can learn about the ways in which you look at your data. Do you have any examples you might be willing to show me before the end of our visit?

30. Those are all of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to tell us or that you think we should have asked?

Appendix C-2

Site Visit Protocol

Interview Guide for Other Managers, Coordinators, and Specialists

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. I'm [INTERVIEWER NAME] and this is my colleague [ASSISTANT NAME] and we're researchers from the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization in Washington, DC. As you may have heard, your Head Start program has been invited to participate in a research study called "School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning," funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As part of this study, we are visiting 12 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees from across the country. Our goal is to learn about grantees' experiences with setting school readiness goals and opinions towards the school readiness goals requirement, but we are <u>not</u> evaluating whether programs are meeting the requirement or not. The purpose of the study is to inform the Office of Head Start about how Head Start programs are implementing this requirement and what their strengths and needs are..

During our visit to your program, we will be meeting with program leaders, staff, parents, and other key stakeholders to get different perspectives on your program and its goals.

Our meeting with you today will last about an hour. The structure will be rather open-ended, meaning we have a list of specific questions to cover but we welcome any responses you may have.

INFORMED CONSENT

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to give you a copy of a consent form that describes our study procedures and your rights as a participant. If you agree to the study procedures, I'll ask you to sign and date your copy.

[N0TE TO FACILITATORS: Give copy of consent form to participant. Participant must sign and return one copy and may keep the second copy.]

- I'll point out that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.
- Everyone who works on this study has signed a *Staff Confidentiality Pledge* prohibiting disclosure of anything you say during the interview that would allow someone outside the research team, including government staff and officials, to identify you. The only exception is a researcher may be required by law to report suspicion of immediate harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
- Your name and other identifying information, such as the program's name and specific location, will be removed from the data to protect your privacy.
- We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. With your permission, we will audio record the session and take notes (written and/or on a laptop computer). Those notes will not include your name. The recording will serve as a back-up tool to ensure we capture all your comments in as close to your words as possible. Once the project is complete, all recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment, please let us know and we will do so.

Do you have any questions about the study procedures?

 [If anyone objects to recording the discussion, the researcher who is not leading the interview will need to take thorough notes.]

PROTOCOL

[CONSTRUCT: Program context. Management training and experience.]

1. Let's start by having you share a little about yourself. Please tell us your job title, your educational background or training, how long you've worked in this position, and a brief description of your primary role and responsibilities in the program.

[CONSTRUCT: Perspectives towards school readiness goals mandate.]

2. Under new Head Start standards, programs are now required to establish school readiness goals and measure children's progress towards goals. Are you familiar with this new requirement about establishing school readiness goals?

   a) (If yes) How did you first learn about this requirement?

   b) What do you think about the school readiness goals requirement?
      Was this something you were doing already, or was setting school readiness goals new to you?
      (Probe whether they previously had school readiness goals for the program or individual children and whether they collected data to measure progress towards goals.)

[CONSTRUCT: Familiarity with program's own school readiness goals]

3. I'd like to talk about the specific school readiness goals your program has established. How familiar are you with your program's school readiness goals?
      (Probe how they learned about the goals, if director shared a copy or presented at a meeting, if staff were involved in decision-making, etc.)

   a) <u>If separate EHS goals</u>: How familiar are you with the school readiness goals for infants and toddlers?

[CONSTRUCT: Involvement in goal setting process.]

4. Were you involved in developing the program's school readiness goals?

   (If involved) What role did you have?

   (All)
   a) From what you know, who was responsible for leading the effort?

b) Who else was involved?

c) From your perspective, was everyone involved in the process who needed to be to make it successful? Or was someone missing or not as involved as you would have liked?

[CONSTRUCT: Infusing goals into practice and daily operations]

5. Thinking back to before you had school readiness goals and now, how, if at all, has your work changed?
   a) What, if any, changes have been made to the program? *(Probe for changes to professional development, curriculum & instruction, assessments, services delivered, program philosophy, etc.)*
   b) In what way have these changes been helpful?
   c) In what ways have these changes created new or different challenges?

[CONSTRUCT: Measuring progress towards goals]

6. Tell me about the kinds of measures or assessment tools you (and your staff) use to determine progress towards school readiness goals.

7. Did you (or your staff) receive training in how to use these measures and collect the data?
   a) Who received training?
   b) What did the training involve? *(Probe for whether training was a one-time event or repeated to reinforce skills; any plans to reinforce training.)*
   c) Do you feel the training was sufficient? Why or why not?

8. How have these measures been working out for you? Are there any goals (or developmental domains) for which you feel you don't have the right measure or enough measures to really understand whether you're reaching the goal (or that children are developing)?

9. Are there populations or groups of children for whom you feel that the measures are not working well? For which populations or groups?

[CONSTRUCT: Data use]

10. Once these data are collected, what do you do with the data?

(Probe: Do you submit it to someone else, do you analyze it yourself, do you save it in a file for safekeeping and possible analysis later, or something else?)

    a) What types of data analyses or reports do you see/run?

        i. Do you aggregate the data to analyze at the classroom/group level? At the center level? At the program level?

        ii. Do you aggregate the data to compare different groups of children? What groups? *(Probe for child characteristics, such age, race/ethnicity, language, or gender.)*

        iii. (For supervisors) Do you aggregate the data by teacher or home visitor for the purpose of training and supervision?

        iv. Do you compare school readiness data across different years?

        v. What types of analyses do you run for each child?

    b) What kinds of things do you look for as you review the information?

    c) How do you determine whether children are making progress toward the goals you've set? How do you know if there has been "enough" growth?

    (Probes: look at school readiness growth in individual children over time, look at growth toward specific skills, compare scores to norms, look at aggregated scores over time within the program)

11. Have you ever had difficulty interpreting the data (or the information in the data reports you received)?

    a) What was challenging about it?

    b) What would have made it easier for you to understand?

    c) Is there any information you would like to get from the data but can't get? What information?

[CONSTRUCT: Communication regarding progress]

12. What, if any, information is shared between you and the staff who you supervise regarding progress towards school readiness goals?
(Probe for how, when, and the type of information shared.)
   a) Do you ever use the information you learn to help with training and supervision? How?
   b) Do you provide data broken down into groups that individual staff members work with (e.g., classes, caseloads, etc.)?

13. What information do you share with other program leaders regarding progress towards school readiness goals? *(Probe for how, when, and the type of information shared.)*

[CONSTRUCT: Data-driven decision-making]

14. Have the results you've seen from school readiness assessments ever led you to make changes to the program and to the work you (or your staff) do?

   a) Can you provide a few examples of changes you've made?
   (Probe for changes to professional development, curriculum & instruction, assessments, services delivered, program philosophy, etc.)

   b) Have these changes been helpful?

   c) Are there other changes you would like to make?

   (Probe for any larger changes that affect multiple children, such as changes in curriculum, practices, and services offered.)

[CONSTRUCT: Prioritization of goals]

15. From your perspective, has the program emphasized certain goals more than others?
   a) Why do think that's the case?
   b) *IF HS/EHS:* Are priorities similar for infants and toddlers as for preschoolers?

[CONSTRUCT: Supports needed to use goals]

16. What kinds of resources or support would you and your staff need to better measure progress towards school readiness goals and use goals for planning?

    (Probe: For example, some programs have mentioned the T/TA available to them, their program leadership, partnerships, and other resources.)

[CONSTRUCT: Usefulness of school readiness goals requirement]

17. Overall, do you think that the school readiness goals requirement has been useful for your program? Why or why not?

18. Those are all of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to tell us or that you think we should have asked?

Appendix C-3

Site Visit Protocol

Interview Guide for Staff

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. I'm [INTERVIEWER NAME] and this is my colleague [ASSISTANT NAME] and we're researchers from the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization in Washington, DC. As you may have heard, your Head Start program has been invited to participate in a research study called "School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning," funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As part of this study, we are visiting 12 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees from across the country. Our goal is to learn about grantees' experiences with setting school readiness goals and their opinions towards the school readiness goals requirement, but we are <u>not</u> evaluating whether programs are meeting the requirement or not. The purpose of the study is to inform the Office of Head Start about how Head Start programs are implementing this requirement and what their strengths and needs are.

During our visit to your program, we will be meeting with program leaders, staff, parents, and other key stakeholders to get different perspectives on your program and its goals.

Our meeting with you today will last about an hour. The structure will be rather open-ended, meaning we have a list of specific questions to cover but we welcome any responses you may have.

INFORMED CONSENT

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to give you a copy of a consent form that describes our study procedures and your rights as a participant. If you agree to the study procedures, I'll ask you to sign and date your copy.

[N0TE TO FACILITATORS: Give copy of consent form to participant to read. Participant must sign and return one copy and may keep the second copy.]

- I'll point out that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.
- Everyone who works on this study has signed a *Staff Confidentiality Pledge* prohibiting disclosure of anything you say during the interview that would allow someone outside the research team, including government staff and officials, to identify you. The only exception is a researcher may be required by law to report suspicion of immediate harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
- Your name and other identifying information, such as the program's name and specific location, will be removed from the data to protect your privacy.
- We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. With your permission, we will audio record the session and take notes (written and/or on a laptop computer). Those notes will not include your name. The recording will serve as a back-up tool to ensure we capture all your comments in as close to your words as possible. Once the project is complete, all recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment, please let us know and we will do so.

Do you have any questions about the study procedures?

[If anyone objects to recording the discussion, the researcher who is not leading the interview will need to take thorough notes.]

PROTOCOL

[CONSTRUCT: Program context. Staff training and experience.]

1. Let's start by having you each introduce yourself. Please tell us your job title, how long you've been in your current position, any other Head Start positions you've held previously, and your educational background.

[CONSTRUCT: Perspectives towards school readiness goals mandate.]

2. Under new Head Start standards, programs are now required to establish school readiness goals and measure children's progress towards goals. Are you familiar with this new requirement about establishing school readiness goals?

   a) (If yes) How did you first learn about this requirement?

   b) What do you think about the school readiness goals requirement?

   c) Was this something you were doing already, or was setting school readiness goals new to you? *(Probe whether they previously had school readiness goals for the program or individual children and whether they collected data to measure progress towards goals.)*

[CONSTRUCT: Familiarity with program's own school readiness goals]

3. I'd like to talk about the specific school readiness goals and objectives your program has established.
   a) Are you familiar with your program's school readiness goals?
      (Probe how they learned about the goals, if director shared a copy or presented at a meeting, if staff were involved in decision-making, etc.)

   b) If separate EHS goals: How familiar are you with the school readiness goals for infants and toddlers?

[CONSTRUCT: Opinions of school readiness goals.]

4. What do you think of the goals and objectives your program set? *(Probe whether these are the best goals for the program and why/why not.)*

   a) Do you feel that the goals reflect the needs of all the children? Or some children better than others? How so?

[CONSTRUCT: Involvement in goal setting process.]

5. Were you involved in developing your program's school readiness goals, or do you know of other staff in positions similar to yours who were involved?

   (If involved) What role did you have?

   (All)
   a) From what you know, who was responsible for leading the effort?
   b) Who else was involved?
   c) From your perspective, was everyone involved in the process who needed to be to make it successful? Or was someone missing or not as involved as you would have liked?

[CONSTRUCT: Infusing goals into practice and daily operations]

6. Thinking back to before you had school readiness goals and now, how, if at all, has your teaching/work changed?

[CONSTRUCT: Measuring progress towards goals]

7. Tell me about the kinds of measures or assessment tools you use to assess progress towards school readiness goals.

8. Are you involved in collecting these data? How often and when do you (or others) collect data with these measures? *(If a Work Sampling System is used, probe for how materials are gathered and other types of data that are collected, such as from screeners.)*

9. Did you receive any training in how to use these measures and collect the data? What was the training like?

10. Have you experienced any challenges using these measures or in collecting the information you need? How so?

[CONSTRUCT: Data use]

11. What happens to the data after you collect it?

(Probe: Do you submit it to someone else, do you analyze it yourself, do you save it in a file for safekeeping and possible analysis later, or something else?)

   a) Do you ever get data reports back?
      i. What types of data reports do you run/see?
      ii. At what level are the reports (e.g., broken out by your class or caseload, for the program as a whole, etc.)?

   b) What kinds of things do you look for as you review the information?
      i. Do you look at progress for each child?
      ii. What about progress for all the children you work with?
      iii. Do you ever look at the information for different groups of children? What groups?
      iv. Do you look at information broken down in other ways? In what ways?

12. How do you determine whether children are making progress toward the goals you've set? How do you know if there has been "enough" growth?

(Probes: look at school readiness growth in individual children over time, look at growth toward specific skills, compare scores to norms, look at aggregated scores over time within the program)

13. Have you ever had difficulty interpreting the data (or the information in the data reports you received)?
   a) What was challenging about it?
   b) What would have made it easier for you to understand?
   c) Is there any information you would like to get from the data but can't get? What information?

[CONSTRUCT: Communication regarding progress]

14. What, if any, information is shared between you and your direct supervisor regarding progress towards school readiness goals and objectives?
(Probe for how, when, and the type of information shared.)

   a) Have you ever looked at information together and talked about actions you could take?

15. What kind of information about progress towards school readiness goals do you share with families?
   a) Do parents get specific information about their child and whether their child is reaching set goals? When and how?

   b) Do parents get information about the progress of all children you care for?

   c) How are parents involved in planning to make sure their children are making progress and getting the support that they need?

[CONSTRUCT: Data-driven decision-making]

16. Have the results you've seen from school readiness assessments ever led you to change your [teaching/work] in any way?
   a) Can you provide a few examples of changes you've made?

   b) Have these changes been helpful?

   c) Are there other changes you would like to make?

[CONSTRUCT: Prioritization of goals]

17. From your perspective, has the program emphasized certain goals more than others?
   a) Why do think that's the case?
   b) *IF HS/EHS:* Are priorities similar for infants and toddlers as for preschoolers?

[CONSTRUCT: Supports needed to use goals]

18. What kinds of resources or support would you need to better measure progress towards school readiness goals and use goals for planning?
(Probe: For example, some programs have mentioned the T/TA available to them, their program leadership, partnerships, and other resources.)

[CONSTRUCT: Usefulness of school readiness goals requirement]

19. Overall, do you think that the school readiness goals requirement has been useful for your program? Why or why not?

20. Those are all of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to tell us or that you think we should have asked?

Appendix C-4

Site Visit Protocol

Interview Guide for Governing Body or Policy Council Representatives

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. I'm [INTERVIEWER NAME] and this is my colleague [ASSISTANT NAME], and we're researchers from the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization in Washington, DC. As you may have heard, your Head Start program has been invited to participate in a research study called "School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning," funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As part of this study, we are visiting 12 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees from across the country. Our goal is to learn about grantees' experiences with setting school readiness goals and their opinions towards the school readiness goals requirement, but we are <u>not</u> evaluating whether programs are meeting the requirement or not. The purpose of the study is to inform the Office of Head Start about how Head Start programs are implementing this requirement and what their strengths and needs are.

During our visit to your program, we will be meeting with program leaders, staff, parents, and other key stakeholders to get different perspectives on your program and its goals.

Our meeting with you today will last about 45 minutes. The structure will be rather open-ended, meaning we have a list of specific questions to cover but we welcome any responses you may have.

INFORMED CONSENT

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to give you a copy of a consent form that describes our study procedures and your rights as a participant. If you agree to the study procedures, I'll ask you to sign and date your copy.

[N0TES TO FACILITATORS: Give copy of consent form to participant to read. Participant must sign and return one copy and may keep the second copy.]

- I'll point out that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.
- Everyone who works on this study has signed a *Staff Confidentiality Pledge* prohibiting disclosure of anything you say during the interview that would allow someone outside the research team, including government staff and officials, to identify you. The only exception is a researcher may be required by law to report suspicion of immediate harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
- Your name and other identifying information, such as the program's name and specific location, will be removed from the data to protect your privacy.
- We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. With your permission, we will audio record the session and take notes (written and/or on a laptop computer). Those notes will not include your name. The recording will serve as a back-up tool to ensure we capture all your comments in as close to your words as possible. Once the project is complete, all recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment, please let us know and we will do so.

Do you have any questions about the study procedures?

[If anyone objects to recording the discussion, the researcher who is not leading the interview will need to take thorough notes.]

PROTOCOL

[CONSTRUCT: Program context: Background of governing body/policy council representatives.]

1. Let's start by having each of you introduce yourself. Please tell us the group or organization that you represent, and what role you serve on the governing body/ policy council. (Policy council: And if you are a parent of a child in Head Start or Early Head Start, please tell us how old your child is and how long she or he has been in the program.)

2. Would you please sum up for me what you see as your key responsibilities in this role?
   a) How often do you meet as a group?
   b) What communication do you have with the program director and staff?

[CONSTRUCT: Perspectives towards school readiness goals mandate.]

3. As you may know, Head Start programs are now required to establish school readiness goals and measure children's progress towards goals. Are you familiar with this new requirement about school readiness goals?

   a) (If yes) How did you first learn about this requirement?

   b) What do you think about the school readiness goals requirement?

   c) Was this something the program was doing already, or was setting school readiness goals new to you?

[CONSTRUCT: Familiarity with program's own school readiness goals.]

4. I'd like to talk about the specific school readiness goals your program has established.
   a) Are you familiar with the program's school readiness goals?
   (Probe how they learned about the goals, if director shared a copy or presented at a meeting, if members were involved in decision-making, etc.)

   b) If separate EHS goals: Do you know of different school readiness goals for preschoolers and for infants & toddlers?

[CONSTRUCT: Involvement in goal setting process.]

5. Were any of you or other members of the [GOVERNING BODY/ POLICY COUNCIL] involved with developing or approving the program's school readiness goals?
   a) (If yes) What role did you have?
   b) From your perspective, was everyone involved in the process who needed to be to make it successful? Or was someone missing or not as involved as you would have liked?
   c) What do you think of how the process was organized? Were you pleased with how things turned out? Why or why not?

[CONSTRUCT: Communication regarding progress]

6. What information have you received regarding the program's progress towards school readiness goals?
   a) How is information shared with you? In what format? How frequently?
   b) Is the information you have been receiving useful? Is there other information that you wish you had that you have not received? Why or why not?

   (Probe if group has actually received updates on progress towards school readiness goals and how. For parent members, try to probe whether they get information about the whole program separate from information about their own children.)

[CONSTRUCT: Data-driven decision-making]

7. Have you made any decisions as a group based on the information you have received? What kinds of decisions have you made (particularly related to the program's progress towards its school readiness goals)?

   (If no decisions have been made yet, probe about future planning and how school readiness data will be useful.)

[CONSTRUCT: Usefulness of school readiness goals requirement]

8. Overall, do you think that the school readiness goal requirement has been useful for your program? Why or why not?

9. Those are all of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to tell us or that you think we should have asked?

Appendix C-5

Site Visit Protocol

Interview Guide for Local Education Agency Representative

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. I'm [INTERVIEWER NAME] and this is my colleague [ASSISTANT NAME], and we're researchers from the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization in Washington, DC. We are leading a research study called "School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning," funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As part of this study, we are visiting 12 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees from across the country. [NAME OF HEAD START PROGRAM] has been invited to participate in the study which involves a site visit to the program during which we're meeting with program leaders, staff, parents, and other key stakeholders to get different perspectives on the program and its goals.

Our goal is to learn about grantees' experiences with setting school readiness goals and their opinions towards the school readiness goals requirement, but we are <u>not</u> evaluating whether programs are meeting the requirement or not. The purpose of the study is to inform the Office of Head Start about how Head Start programs are implementing this requirement and what their strengths and needs are.

Our meeting with you today will last about an hour. The structure will be rather open-ended, meaning we have a list of specific questions to cover but we welcome any responses you may have.

INFORMED CONSENT

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to give you a copy of a consent form that describes our study procedures and your rights as a participant. If you agree to the study procedures, I'll ask you to sign and date your copy.

[N0TE TO FACILITATORS: Give copy of consent form to participant to read. Participant must sign and return one copy and may keep the second copy.

- I'll point out that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.
- Everyone who works on this study has signed a *Staff Confidentiality Pledge* prohibiting disclosure of anything you say during the interview that would allow someone outside the research team, including government staff and officials, to identify you. The only exception is a researcher may be required by law to report suspicion of immediate harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
- Your name and other identifying information, such as the program's name and specific location, will be removed from the data to protect your privacy.
- We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. With your permission, we will audio record the session and take notes (written and/or on a laptop computer). Those notes will not include your name. The recording will serve as a back-up tool to ensure we capture all your comments in as close to your words as possible. Once the project is complete, all recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment, please let us know and we will do so.

Do you have any questions about the study procedures?

[If anyone objects to recording the discussion, the researcher who is not leading the interview will need to take thorough notes.]

PROTOCOL

1. To begin, would you please tell us your job title and give a brief description of your job responsibilities?

[CONSTRUCT: Community context: Local school readiness needs and standards]

2. We'd like to hear your thoughts on the school readiness of children in this community.

   a) First, does your school district have a kindergarten readiness assessment or screener, or specific standards for what children should know when they enter kindergarten? Would you please describe what those are?

      a. Are these assessments/standards used state-wide or only in your district? Were the district's standards influenced by standards and policies at the state level?

   b) About what percent of children entering kindergarten in your district would you say arrive ready for school?

   c) In what ways are children not ready for school? Why do you think that is?

   d) What challenges does the district face in working with children who are not ready?

[CONSTRUCT: Nature of relationship between program and LEA]

3. What can you tell me about [NAME OF HEAD START PROGRAM]?
   (Probe for whether there is a defined partnership and for how long they have had a partnership.)

4. Do you or someone else in your agency regularly collaborate with [NAME OF HEAD START PROGRAM] or have you done so in the past?
   a) If yes, tell me about that effort? (*Probe for purpose, who was involved, and when or if ongoing.*)

[CONSTRUCT: Perspectives towards school readiness goals mandate]

5. Under new Head Start standards, programs are now required to establish school readiness goals and measure children's progress towards goals. Are you familiar with this new requirement about establishing school readiness goals?
   a) (if yes) How did you first learn about this requirement? *(Probe whether program ever communicated directly about need to establish goals.)*

6. What do you think about the school readiness goals requirement?
   a) How does the goals requirement align with education initiatives already in place? How does it conflict with them? *(Probe for early learning guidelines; efforts to align standards, curriculum and assessments; kindergarten school readiness assessment; state QRIS; public pre-k-Head Start collaborations; Birth through Three initiatives)*

[CONSTRUCT: Usefulness of school readiness goals requirement]

7. Overall, do you think that the school readiness goals requirement will be useful for your work and for the Head Start program?
   a) If so, how? If not, what would make it useful?

[CONSTRUCT: Challenges to meeting mandate]

8. What, if any, parts of the requirement do you think will be challenging for [NAME HEAD START PROGRAM]?
   (Probe capacity to collect valid and reliable data and use data for planning.)

[CONSTRUCT: Supports needed to use goals]

9. What, if any, supports do you think will be necessary to help Head Start programs use their goals and data to improve their practice?

[CONSTRUCT: LEA T/TA and communication regarding expectations for school readiness]

10. What information or guidance do [you/the local school system] provide to early education programs in the community about school readiness and expectations for kindergarten?

    a) What, if any, training, technical assistance, or other supports are offered to programs and providers to help meet expectations?
       i. Do you know if [NAME OF HEAD START PROGRAM] has participated in any training or used these resources?

[CONSTRUCT: Familiarity with program's own school readiness goals]

11. I'd like to talk about the specific school readiness goals [NAME OF HEAD START PROGRAM] has established. Are you familiar with the actual school readiness goals the program has set?

    (Probe how they learned about the program's goals, if director shared a copy or presented at a meeting, if LEA was involved in decision-making, etc.)

    (Provide copy of goals if not familiar.)

12. <u>If separate EHS goals</u>: How familiar are you with [NAME OF HEAD START PROGRAM]'s school readiness goals for infants and toddlers?

[CONSTRUCT: Involvement in goal-setting process]

13. Were you or others from the local school system involved in setting the program's school readiness goals?
    a) (If yes) What role did you have?
    b) (If no) Were you or others you know ever asked to review the goals and provide input?

[CONSTRUCT: Opinion of program's school readiness goals]

14. What do you think of the program's school readiness goals? How do they align with the goals of the LEA?

[CONSTRUCT: Communication regarding progress towards goals]

15. Does [PROGRAM NAME] ever communicate with you about children's progress towards school readiness goals?
    a) What information does the program share with you?
    b) How is information shared with you? In what format? How frequently?
    c) Is the information you have been receiving useful? Is there other information that you wish you had that you have not received? Why or why not?

16. Those are all of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to tell us or that you think we should have asked?

Appendix C-6

Site Visit Protocol

Interview Guide for Parents

INTRODUCTION

I'd like to begin by thanking you for taking time out of your day to be here. We really appreciate it.

I'm [INTERVIEWER NAME] and this is my colleague [ASSISTANT NAME], and we're researchers from the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization in Washington, DC.

As you may have heard, your (Early) Head Start program has been invited to participate in a research study called "School Readiness Goals and Head Start Program Functioning," funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As part of this study, we are visiting 12 Head Start and Early Head Start programs from across the country. Our goal is to learn about program's experiences with setting school readiness goals and their opinions towards the school readiness goals requirement, but we are <u>not</u> evaluating whether programs are meeting the requirement or not. The purpose of the study is to inform the Office of Head Start about how Head Start programs are implementing this requirement and what their strengths and needs are.

We will use this information to write a research report that will help policymakers and the public learn more about how Head Start programs operate in different parts of the country.

You have been invited here because you are a parent of a child in (Early) Head Start. Over the next 45 minutes or so we want to talk with you about your experiences with this program.

INFORMED CONSENT

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to give you a copy of a consent form that describes our study procedures and your rights as a participant. If you agree to the study procedures, I'll ask you to sign and date your copy.

[N0TES TO FACILITATORS: Give copy of consent form to participant to read. Participant must sign and return one copy and may keep the second copy.]

- I'll point out that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.
- Everyone who works on this study has signed a *Staff Confidentiality Pledge* prohibiting disclosure of anything you say during the interview that would allow someone outside the research team, including government staff and officials, to identify you. The only exception is a researcher may be required by law to report suspicion of immediate harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
- Your name and other identifying information, such as the program's name and specific location, will be removed from the data to protect your privacy.
- We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. With your permission, we will audio record the session and take notes (written and/or on a laptop computer). Those notes will not include your name. The recording will serve as a back-up tool to ensure we capture all your comments in as close to your words as possible. Once the project is complete, all recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment, please let us know and we will do so.

Do you have any questions about the study procedures?

[If anyone objects to recording the discussion, the researcher who is not leading the interview will need to take thorough notes.]

PROTOCOL

[CONSTRUCT: Program context. Child and family characteristics/needs]

1. To start, would you please tell us how many children you have and how old they are, if they are or were in Head Start or Early Head Start, and how long they've been in the program?

2. What are some of the reasons why you enrolled in the (Early) Head Start program? What attracted you to the program?

[CONSTRUCT: Parent understanding of school readiness]

3. Next, I'd like to talk about what "school readiness" means to you. What you think your child needs to learn in (Early) Head Start and at home in order to be ready for kindergarten? (What are the different skills and behaviors he or she needs to have?)

[CONSTRUCT: Familiarity with program's own school readiness goals]

4. (Early) Head Start programs are now required to set school readiness goals and measure children's progress towards their goals. Have you heard about your program having school readiness goals?

   If EHS, probe: Have you heard of any goals for infants and toddlers in terms of their healthy development?

   a) (If yes) How did you first hear about it?

   (Probe for whether parent knows about overall program goals, individual goals for his/her own child, the mandate itself, the assessments being used, etc.)

      i. Did the program staff give you any materials that showed the program's goals?

      ii. Did you ever participate in any meetings when they talked about setting goals for all children in the program?

   b) Do you wish the program had shared the goals with you (in a different way)?

[CONSTRUCT: Involvement in goal setting process]

5. Were you involved in developing your program's school readiness goals or do you know any parent who was involved?
   a) Do you know if your program asked parents for input?
   b) (If no or unsure) Do you think the program should have asked parents for input? How?

   [IF PARENTS HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF GOAL SETTING PROCESS]
   a) From what you know, what was the process of setting goals like?
   b) Did you or other parents get a chance to talk about what you thought was important?
   c) Do you know if parents involved with the process are pleased with how it went?

[CONSTRUCT: Communication regarding progress]

6. Do program staff ever share information with you regarding how your child is doing on different skills, such as the results of observations, assessments, or your child's work?
   a) What kind of information do you receive?
   b) Who shares it with you?
   c) In what format is the information? Do they set up a one-on-one meeting to talk to you? Do they give you any materials to keep or show you any records they have collected?
   d) How often does this happen?

7. Do staff talk to you about whether your child is reaching certain goals that have been set? What kinds of things do they share?

8. Have the staff ever told you how <u>all</u> children in the program are doing and if the whole group is reaching their school readiness goals?
   a) What kinds of things do they tell you?
   b) How often do they share this information?

9. Do you wish staff would communicate with you more or in a different way? How so?

[CONSTRUCT: Parent involvement in planning process]

10. Have you ever met with program staff to create a plan for your child focused on reaching certain goals? How did you and the staff person go about setting plans for your child?

a) Did you find out which skills your child still needs to develop to be on track?
   i. What kinds of skills?
b) Did the (teacher/home visitor) talk to you about ways to help your child develop specific skills?
   i. What kinds of things did you talk about?

[CONSTRUCT: Usefulness of school readiness goals mandate]

11. Do you think the program's school readiness goals are helpful to your child? How so?

12. How, if at all, are the program's school readiness goals helpful to you as a parent?

[CONSTRUCT: Prioritization of goals]

13. School readiness goals can cover a range of different areas of child development, such as health and physical development, social skills, language and literacy, and more. From your perspective, has the program emphasized certain goals or skills more than others? Why do think that's the case?

14. Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you would like to tell us—anything important about the program and your experiences that we should know about?

Appendix C-7

Interview Protocol for AIAN Head Start Program Directors

INTRODUCTION

Hello, this is _____, calling from the Urban Institute. May I please speak with [*insert respondent name*]? I am calling to conduct the telephone interview we discussed *(insert yesterday, a few days ago, last week, a few weeks ago, etc.).* Is this still a good time?

If no. I understand. When would be a good time to reschedule? *(set new date/time).*

INFORMED CONSENT

Terrific. As I explained when we spoke before, the Urban Institute has received funding from the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to conduct this study. The purpose of the study is to learn from Head Start and Early Head Start programs about their experiences setting school readiness goals and using information about school readiness to inform program planning. Before I begin my questions, I want to explain our study procedures and your rights as a participant.

The information you share in this telephone interview will be kept private. That means your individual answers will not be shared with anyone outside the research staff working on the study, except as required by child abuse and neglect reporting law. When we report our findings, information from the four AIAN grantees we interview will be put together and presented so that no individual's answers can be identified. Also, we will not use your name, the name of your program, your location or any other identifying information in any of our reports.

We want to make sure that you freely consent to participate in this phone interview and that, except for losing the opportunity to share your views, you understand there won't be any consequences to you or your program if you choose not to participate or not to answer any questions in the interview. Do you consent to participate in the interview?

Because this is a government-sponsored research project that falls under the Paperwork Reduction Act, I have to read the following statement to comply with Act.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing the instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and compiling and reviewing the collection of information. This information collection is voluntary. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this study is OMB/PRA 0970-0438. You can send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to ACF. Would you like that address? [Reports Clearance Officer (Attn: OMB/PRA 0970-0438) Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W. Washington, DC 20447.]

The interview will last about an hour, though if something urgent comes up while we are talking please let me know and I can wait or we can continue at another time. Do you have any questions about the Urban Institute or the study before we get started?

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

1. To start, would you please tell us your job title, how long you've worked in this position, and give a brief description of your primary role and responsibilities in the program?

   Optional probe: Have you held any other positions in this program or in other Head Start or Early Head Start programs?

2. Tell us a little about your program and the community you serve?

   Probe: What are the ages of the children you serve?
   Optional probes: How long has your Head Start program been in operation?
   How many children do you currently serve?
   What are the service delivery models you use?

GOAL-SETTING PROCESS

3. I'd like to ask you some questions about your program's process for developing school readiness goals. But first, can you tell me how you first heard about the new requirement to set school readiness goals?
   a) What did you think of the requirement when you first heard about it?
   b) Did your program already have school readiness goals or something similar, or was this idea new to your program?

4. Where is your program in the process of establishing school readiness goals? Has your program already established school readiness goals, are you in the process of establishing them, or have you not yet started establishing your school readiness goals?
   a) (If established) When did you finalize your school readiness goals?

5. Once you learned of the school readiness goals requirement, what steps did you take to establish your program's goals?

   Optional probes:
   a) How did you or others decide who should lead the goal-setting effort? Why?
   b) What role did you have?
   c) Who else was involved and how?
   d) What kind of input was sought/given?

e) From your perspective, was everyone involved in the process who needed to be to make it successful? Or was someone missing or not as involved as you would have liked?

f) Can you tell me about how you went from setting the larger goals to deciding the objectives and measures you'd use for each goal?

g) *IF SERVING 0-5:* How was the process the same or different for setting goals (and objectives) for preschool children and for infants and toddlers?

   o What made you decide to have a [single set of goals for 0-5 / different sets of goals for preschoolers and infants and toddlers]?

h) Tell me about some of the challenges you faced in the goal setting process?

i) Did your tribal government have a role in the process?

6. We want to learn more about the things that shape the actual goals and objectives selected by Head Start programs. As you think about your goals, what kinds of things did you consider when choosing your goals and objectives? Were there any special considerations related to the community you serve?

7. Did you use any information provided by the Office of Head Start, the national Head Start technical assistance centers, or local TA providers during the process of setting your school readiness goals? Tell us about the information you used and how you used it.

Optional probes

a) How did you get the information: through the web, printed materials, conference calls, workshops or conferences?

b) What information was most useful? Why?

c) What information was not very useful? Why?

d) How timely was the information you received?

e) Was the information/support relevant to your community and the population of children and families you serve? Please explain.

8. As you were setting your goals, what information or support was most useful? Why?

9. What other kinds of information or support would have been useful to you?

PLANNING

10. So we've talked a lot about how you set the goals. What did you do with the goals after you set them?

   a) Did you tell people about your goals? Who did you tell?

   b) Did you provide information to teachers and other direct service staff to help them understand what the goals mean for their work? How did you communicate this information?

   c) Are there any other steps you plan to take with these goals? *(Probe if goals have been or will be turned into an action plan.)*

   d) *[If program has or is developing an action plan]* What does your action plan include?

      iv. How did/will you prioritize what should go in the plan?

      v. Where are you in the process of implementing the plan?

MEASURES AND DATA ANALYSIS

11. Next, I'd like to discuss any data you collect to measure progress towards goals.
   a) What kinds of measures or assessment tools do staff use to assess school readiness?
   b) Were the measures selected before or after you set your goals?
   c) Why were these measures selected?
   d) What kind of data system do you use to store this information?

12. Once these data are collected, what do you do with the data?
   a) What types of data analyses or reports do you see/run?
      i. Do you aggregate the data at the classroom/group level? At the center level? At the program level?
      ii. Do you aggregate the data to compare different groups of children? What groups?
      iii. Do you aggregate the data by teacher or home visitor for the purpose of training and supervision?
      iv. Do you compare school readiness data across different years?
      v. What types of analyses do you run for each child?

   b) What kinds of things do you look for as you review the information?

c) How do you determine whether children are making progress toward the goals you've set? How do you know if there has been "enough" growth?

d) Who runs the analyses?

    i. Does that staff member have any other responsibilities?

    ii. What kind of training and skills are you looking for in a person with that role in your program?

13. Have you ever had difficulty interpreting the data (or the information in the data reports you received)?

    ii. What was challenging about it?

    iii. What would have made it easier for you to understand?

    iv. Is there any information you would like to get from the data but can't get? What information?

COMMUNICATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

14. What information do you share with others, such as staff, parents, or tribal council, regarding how children are progressing towards school readiness goals?

15. Have the results you've seen from school readiness assessments ever led you to make changes to the program and to the work you (or your staff) do?

a) Can you provide a few examples of changes you've made?

b) Have these changes been helpful?

c) Are there other changes you would like to see?

CHALLENGES AND NEEDED SUPPORTS

16. What's been the most challenging for you and your program during this whole process of setting goals, measuring progress towards goals, and using goals to inform your planning?

17. What kinds of resources or support would you and your staff need to overcome these challenges? (If no challenges, then what is needed to better measure progress towards goals and use goals for planning?)

CLOSING

18. Overall, do you think that the school readiness goals requirement has been useful for your program? Why or why not?

19. Those are all of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to tell us or that you think we should have asked?

Appendix D. Telephone Survey Data Tables

TABLE 1

Starting Place and Timing of Goal Setting

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	**Both HS and EHS**	**Head Start only**	**Early Head Start only**	**% of all grantees**	**Sample size**
Status of goals at time of survey						
Already established	98.3	100.0	95.6	100.0	98.6	72
In the process of establishing	1.7	4.4	0.0	0.0	1.4	1
Not yet established	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Date goals first finalized[a]						
September 2010 or earlier	6.1	5.1	4.5	14.1	5.7	4
October 2010 through December 2011	40.1	44.8	44.7	8.9	37.1	26
January 2012 through August 2012	31.2	33.7	18.2	61.2	35.7	25
September 2012 through August 2013	19.1	16.4	23.4	15.8	18.6	13
September 2013 or later	3.6	0.0	9.2	0.0	2.9	2
Original framework for setting goals						
Started from the ground up	55.3	66.4	39.8	61.4	57.5	42
Modified existing program goals	32.7	26.4	44.4	20.7	30.1	22
Modified goals from another source	12.0	7.2	15.7	17.8	12.3	9

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey questions B1, B2, and B3.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponse and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] Two grantees reporting that goals were set in 2010 and one grantee reporting that goals were set in 2011 were coded in the October 2010 through December 2011 category. One grantee reporting that goals were set in 2012 was coded in the January 2012 through August 2012 category. One grantee that was in the process of setting goals at the time of the survey was coded in the September 2013 or later category. This question had three nonresponses, so the total sample size is 70.

TABLE 2

Individuals Leading the Goal-Setting Process and the Use of Special Committees

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Provided overall direction and supervision for the goal-setting process						
Program director	52.9	49.7	57.9	49.9	52.1	38
Assistant program director	1.5	3.2	0.0	0.0	2.7	2
Education coordinator	30.4	27.1	33.2	33.5	27.4	20
Other	15.2	20.1	8.8	16.6	17.8	13
Responsible for managing the day-to-day work of setting the goals						
Program director	19.3	21.3	8.8	41.9	20.6	15
Assistant program director	1.5	3.2	0.0	0.0	2.7	2
Education coordinator	59.0	44.6	78.0	54.2	52.1	38
Other	20.2	30.9	13.2	3.9	24.7	18
Established a special committee to help with the goal-setting process[a]	89.3	92.5	88.1	81.6	90.3	72
Roles represented on special committee[b]						
Program director or assistant director	73.8	72.9	72.2	82.1	75.4	65
Coordinators or managers	91.8	96.6	87.5	86.9	92.3	65
Center directors or site managers	32.6	31.9	35.6	26.1	27.7	65
Classroom staff or home visitors	81.0	74.3	90.0	79.1	78.5	65
Family service workers	12.0	23.7	10.2	23.2	18.5	65
Policy Council	34.2	33.1	27.5	59.5	33.9	65
Parents	70.2	69.4	61.7	100.0	75.4	65
Local education agency	41.2	39.9	50.2	18.0	35.4	65
Community stakeholders	31.0	26.3	37.8	28.1	29.2	65
External consultants	8.3	9.5	4.6	15.0	9.2	65
Grantee governing body	21.6	22.0	9.5	58.3	23.1	65
Other staff	13.3	21.9	5.0	4.9	16.9	65
Local college representative	13.5	12.2	15.3	13.1	10.8	65
Other	28.5	37.6	20.3	18.0	29.2	65

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions B7, B8, B9, B9a.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging; and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest of differences.

[a] This question had one nonresponse, so the sample size is 72.

[b] This question applied only to grantees that established a special committee to help with the school readiness goal-setting process, so the sample size for these items is 65.

TABLE 3

Considerations when Deciding on Goals

	Weighted Values (%)				**Unweighted Values**	
	All grantees	**Both HS and EHS**	**Head Start only**	**Early Head Start only**	**% of all grantees**	**Sample size**
Coordination of goal-setting process across Head Start and Early Head Start programs[a]						
One process for both	N/A	66.5	N/A	N/A	68.3	28
Separate process for each	N/A	33.5	N/A	N/A	31.7	13
Similarity of goals across Head Start and Early Head Start programs[a]						
Largely the same	N/A	60.2	N/A	N/A	61.0	25
Largely different	N/A	39.8	N/A	N/A	39.0	16
Receive funds from other sources with requirements considered in setting goals[b]	30.6	31.1	34.4	18.4	27.8	72
Formal process for approving the goals	98.1	100.0	95.0	100.0	98.6	73
Individuals/groups formally approving goals[c]						
Director of multipurpose organization[d]	8.2	10.7	8.5	0.0	7.7	65
Program director	14.9	14.6	20.8	0.0	12.5	72
Policy Council	98.5	97.0	100.0	100.0	97.2	72
Organization governing body	77.1	83.5	62.9	93.3	77.8	72
Education advisory committee	4.0	8.4	0.0	0.0	6.9	72
School readiness goals committee	2.6	4.1	0.0	4.7	4.2	72
ACF regional office	5.8	3.3	7.3	10.4	4.2	72
Other	3.2	3.1	4.6	0.0	4.2	72

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions B4, B5, B13, B14, B14a.

Notes: ACF is the Administration for Children and Families. N/A = not applicable. Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question applied only to grantees operating both Head Start and Early Head Start programs, so the total sample size is 41.

[b] This question had one nonresponse, so the sample size is 72.

[c] Question applied only to grantees with a formal processes for approving the goals, so sample size for these items is 72.

[d] "Director of multipurpose organization" applies only to programs operated by an organization delivering multiple kinds of services in addition to Head Start (n = 66) and there was one nonresponse, so sample size is 65.

TABLE 4

Average Level of Staff and Stakeholder Involvement in Deciding on Goals

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
HS/EHS directors and assistant directors	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.9	4.5	73
Directors of multipurpose organizations	2.3	2.5	1.9	2.7	2.4	65[b]
Education coordinators or managers	4.7	4.7	4.9	4.7	4.7	73
Family service coordinators or managers	3.4	3.8	3.0	3.4	3.5	70
Other coordinators or managers	3.5	3.7	3.2	3.5	3.5	69
Center directors or site managers	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.7	3.6	54[c]
Classroom staff	3.7	3.6	3.9	3.9	3.6	70
Home visitors	2.9	2.6	3.0	4.1	3.1	44[c]
Family service workers	2.7	2.5	2.9	2.7	2.6	59[c]
Parents	3.3	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.3	73
Policy Council	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.7	3.5	73
Governing body or board of directors	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.8	2.7	73
Local education agencies or schools	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.3	2.8	71
Community partners	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.4	73[d]
External consultants	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.6	2.3	71[d]

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions B10a through B10n.

Notes: Grantees were asked to rate the involvement of each type of individual on a scale from 1 (not at all involved) to 5 (very heavily involved). Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] "Family service coordinator or manager" and "classroom staff" each had three nonresponses, so the sample size for those items is 70. "Other coordinators managers" had four nonresponses, so the sample size is 69. "Local education agencies or schools" had two nonresponses, so the sample size is 71.

[b] "Directors of multipurpose organizations" applied only to programs operated by an organization delivering multiple kinds of services in addition to Head Start (n = 66), and there was one nonresponse, so the sample size is 65.

[c] "Center directors or site managers" had 19 nonresponses so the sample size is 54. "Home Visitors" had 29 nonresponses, so the sample size is 44. "Family Service Workers" had 14 nonresponses, so the sample size is 59. On these items, some nonresponses are because grantees did not have staff in that position or staff held dual roles such that individuals in that position were reported on in another question in this series.

[d] Responses were coded as "not at all involved" for grantees reporting that the item was not applicable because they did not have any "community partners" (n = 8) or "external consultants" (n = 18). "External consultants" had two nonresponses, so the sample size is 71.

TABLE 5

Grantees with No or Low Stakeholder Involvement in School Readiness Goal Setting

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of All grantees	Sample size
HS/EHS directors and assistant directors	4.2	5.5	4.1	0.0	4.1	73
Director of multipurpose organization	58.1	43.6	75.2	63.7	55.4	65[b]
Education coordinator or manager	0.8	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.4	73
Family service coordinator or manager	20.6	17.7	19.9	32.6	22.9	70
Other coordinators or managers	20.1	14.4	25.8	24.6	20.3	69
Center directors or site managers	13.6	12.8	14.7	14.3	14.8	54[c]
Classroom staff	12.9	19.6	4.4	14.5	14.3	70
Home visitors	29.8	40.6	0.0	0.0	22.7	44[c]
Family service workers	44.5	51.7	34.4	44.4	45.8	59[c]
Parents	18.3	19.3	17.4	17.9	16.4	73
Policy Council	19.2	26.5	17.3	0.0	17.8	73
Governing body or board of directors	51.1	44.2	64.5	36.7	48.0	73
Local education agencies or schools	43.6	42.2	40.3	58.8	43.7	71
Community partners	52.2	55.9	57.0	26.4	52.1	73[d]
External consultants	56.7	56.0	62.5	43.0	56.3	71[d]

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions B10a through B10n.

Notes: Grantees were asked to rate the involvement of each type of individual on a scale from one (not at all involved) to five (very heavily involved). Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] "Family service coordinator or manager" and "classroom staff" each had three nonresponses, so the sample size for those items is 70. "Other coordinators or managers" had four nonresponses, so the sample size is 69. "Local education agencies or schools" had two nonresponses, so the sample size is 71.

[b] "Director of multipurpose organization" applied only to programs operated by an organization delivering multiple kinds of services in addition to Head Start (n = 66), and there was one nonresponse, so the sample size is 65

[c] "Center directors or site managers" had 19 nonresponses so the sample size is 54. "Home visitors" had 29 nonresponses, so the sample size is 44. "Family service workers" had 14 nonresponses, so the sample size is 59. On these items, some nonresponses are because grantees did not have staff in that position or staff held dual roles such that individuals in that position were reported on in another question in this series

[d] Responses were coded as "not at all involved" for grantees reporting that the item was not applicable because they did not have any "community partners" (n = 8) or "external consultants" (n = 18). "External Consultants" had two nonresponses, so the sample size is 71.

TABLE 6

Communication about Goals with Staff and Plans for Revising Goals

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Approach to spreading the word about the goals to program staff						
Formal goal training	44.3	47.4	30.9	71.8	46.6	34
Informal information sharing	16.5	17.4	17.4	10.8	17.8	13
Both	39.2	35.1	51.8	17.4	35.6	26
Frequency with which program plans to revisit and revise goals[a]						
Never	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Every few years	23.4	9.7	38.0	29.0	21.9	16
Every year	67.6	76.6	58.0	64.0	67.1	49
Over the course of each year	9.0	13.7	4.1	7.0	11.0	8

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions D1 and D4.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] Although the survey question asked about revising goals, respondents typically volunteered or reported in an open-ended follow-up question that they were describing the frequency with which they would revisit and possibly revise their goals.

Grantees' Views on School Readiness Goal Requirements and the Goal-Setting Process (Part 1)

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Think having school readiness goals will be useful for the program						
1 (strongly disagree)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
3	7.3	8.9	0.0	23.0	9.6	7
4	16.1	13.1	24.1	3.9	15.1	11
5 (strongly agree)	76.5	78.0	75.9	73.1	75.3	55
Mean	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.5	4.7	73
Think there is not enough time to set goals						
1 (strongly disagree)	42.8	49.6	39.9	27.8	43.8	32
2	20.2	23.2	16.1	21.2	21.9	16
3	19.6	6.1	31.1	33.1	17.8	13
4	12.7	13.9	12.9	8.0	12.3	9
5 (strongly agree)	4.8	7.2	0.0	9.8	4.1	3
Mean	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.5	2.1	73
Understand Office of Head Start requirements on school readiness goals						
1 (strongly disagree)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
2	0.7	1.5	0.0	0.0	1.4	1
3	14.2	13.8	16.1	10.4	13.7	10
4	28.2	23.3	37.4	18.9	24.7	18
5 (strongly agree)	56.9	61.5	46.5	70.8	60.3	44
Mean	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.6	4.4	73
Have the information needed to support goal-setting process						
1 (strongly disagree)	2.6	3.3	0.0	8.0	4.1	3
2	15.0	25.3	4.2	10.4	16.4	12
3	16.5	16.2	13.1	27.4	17.8	13
4	27.4	9.0	51.3	22.5	19.2	14
5 (strongly agree)	38.4	46.2	31.5	31.7	42.5	31
Mean	3.8	3.7	4.1	3.6	3.8	73

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions B6a through B6d.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

Grantees' Views on School Readiness Goal Requirements and the Goal-Setting Process (Part 2)

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	**Both HS and EHS**	**Head Start only**	**Early Head Start only**	**% of all grantees**	**Sample size**
Think it was easy to set program's goals						
1 (strongly disagree)	3.4	6.5	0.0	2.3	4.1	3
2	11.2	16.4	9.0	0.0	9.6	7
3	36.3	26.6	34.5	74.6	37.0	27
4	31.3	21.5	52.2	5.7	27.4	20
5 (strongly agree)	17.8	29.0	4.3	17.4	21.9	16
Mean	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.5	73
Think setting goals was a good use of time						
1 (strongly disagree)	0.7	1.5	0.0	0.0	1.4	1
2	4.9	6.6	0.0	13.2	6.9	5
3	10.5	10.3	11.0	9.8	9.6	7
4	32.6	32.5	37.9	18.1	30.1	22
5 (strongly agree)	51.2	49.1	51.1	58.9	52.1	38
Mean	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.2	73
Think they could have used more support in setting goals						
1 (strongly disagree)	21.6	29.4	13.7	17.4	26.0	19
2	22.6	6.5	36.1	38.8	19.2	14
3	22.2	20.7	24.5	20.7	21.9	16
4	21.6	21.8	21.7	20.8	19.2	14
5 (strongly agree)	12.1	21.6	4.1	2.3	13.7	10
Mean	2.8	3.0	2.5	2.7	2.8	73

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions B6e through B6g.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

Grantees' Views on Challenges in the School Readiness Goal-Setting Process (Part 1)

	Weighted Values (%)			Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	**Both HS and EHS**	**Head Start only**	**Early Head Start only**	**% of all grantees**	**Sample size**
Finding time for the process						
Big challenge	35.6	38.1	29.4	44.8	34.3	25
Medium challenge	37.9	39.9	35.5	37.7	39.7	29
Small challenge	20.7	17.1	30.8	4.7	17.8	13
Not a challenge at all	5.8	5.0	4.3	12.7	8.2	6
Getting staff to engage in the process[a]						
Big challenge	18.4	20.8	18.4	10.4	15.1	11
Medium challenge	38.4	38.8	38.0	38.3	38.4	28
Small challenge	11.4	14.9	8.5	7.5	15.1	11
Not a challenge at all	31.9	25.6	35.2	43.8	31.5	23
Getting parents to engage in the process[b]						
Big challenge	24.8	25.6	17.9	41.7	26.4	19
Medium challenge	48.8	53.9	55.8	12.1	45.8	33
Small challenge	13.3	12.8	17.0	4.7	13.9	10
Not a challenge at all	13.1	7.8	9.3	41.5	13.9	10
Building understanding about how the goals would help the program						
Big challenge	18.2	18.9	20.4	9.8	16.4	12
Medium challenge	41.8	40.9	41.4	45.8	43.8	32
Small challenge	18.0	17.8	17.8	19.0	19.2	14
Not a challenge at all	22.0	22.4	20.4	25.4	20.6	15
Getting enough information about Office of Head Start's expectations on how to meet requirement						
Big challenge	27.6	27.7	30.7	18.4	27.4	20
Medium challenge	32.7	34.0	31.5	32.1	34.3	25
Small challenge	17.8	14.6	17.8	28.8	16.4	12
Not a challenge at all	21.9	23.7	20.1	20.7	21.9	16

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions B19a through B19e.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question had one nonresponse, so the total sample size is 72.

[b] Among grantees operating both Head Start and Early Head Start, Early Head Start focal respondents had values closer to those report by Early Head Start–only grantees and Head Start focal respondents had values closer to those reported by Head Start–only grantees; specifically, respondents in Early Head Start programs appeared more likely to find this a "big challenge."

Grantees' Views on Challenges in the School Readiness Goal-Setting Process (Part 2)

	Weighted Values (%)			Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	**Both HS and EHS**	**Head Start only**	**Early Head Start only**	**% of all grantees**	**Sample size**
Getting enough information about needs of children in community served						
Big challenge	3.9	1.6	4.4	10.4	4.1	3
Medium challenge	20.4	17.1	21.4	28.8	21.9	16
Small challenge	36.2	40.0	29.4	42.4	35.6	26
Not a challenge at all	39.5	41.3	44.8	18.4	38.4	28
Setting useful goals for children under age 3[a]						
Big challenge	9.9	7.3	N/A	18.4	9.3	5
Medium challenge	23.7	23.9	N/A	23.0	22.2	12
Small challenge	34.3	31.5	N/A	43.6	33.3	18
Not a challenge at all	32.2	37.3	N/A	15.0	35.2	19
Setting goals that are respectful of child and family diversity						
Big challenge	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Medium challenge	20.4	9.5	37.9	8.0	15.1	11
Small challenge	33.5	43.9	13.0	56.3	38.4	28
Not a challenge at all	46.1	46.6	49.1	35.7	46.6	34
Fitting the goals into existing goals and/or planning process[b]						
Big challenge	1.7	3.6	0.0	0.0	2.8	2
Medium challenge	36.4	38.6	35.1	31.9	30.6	22
Small challenge	23.1	28.6	19.8	12.6	27.8	20
Not a challenge at all	38.8	29.2	45.1	55.4	38.9	28

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions B19f through B19i.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question applied only to grantees operating an Early Head Start program and there was one nonresponse, so the total sample size is 54.

[b] This question had one nonresponse, so the total sample size is 72.

TABLE 9

Establishing Measures for Goals

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	**Both HS and EHS**	**Head Start only**	**Early Head Start only**	**% of all grantees**	**Sample size**
Program has identified measures for goals	99.3	100.0	100.0	98.4	98.6	73
Share of goals with measures identified[a]						
All	85.6	84.3	86.9	86.3	86.1	62
Most	14.4	15.7	13.1	13.7	13.9	10
Some	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
None	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions C1 and C1a.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question only applied to grantees that previously reported they identified measures for goals, so the total sample size is 72.

TABLE 10

Staff and Technology Supporting School Readiness Goal Data Collection and Management

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Program has someone with job title of data manager, data analyst, evaluation manager, or something similar	26.4	36.8	18.4	13.7	26.0	73
Hiring staff to collect and manage data related to school readiness goal requirement						
Not hired	80.6	81.6	77.9	84.9	80.8	59
Already hired	12.0	14.3	13.4	0.0	11.0	8
Have plans to hire	7.4	4.1	8.7	15.1	8.2	6
Program made improvements to technology because of goals requirement[a]	62.2	63.9	61.6	58.1	62.5	72

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions C3, C4, and C5.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question had one nonresponse, so the sample size is 72.

TABLE 11

Frequency with which Aggregate Data Are Shared with Program Stakeholders

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	**Both HS and EHS**	**Head Start only**	**Early Head Start only**	**% of all grantees**	**Sample size**
Parents[a]						
Never	25.3	27.0	20.4	33.5	23.6	17
Once a year	10.4	13.4	7.0	10.3	11.1	8
A few times a year	62.6	59.7	68.3	56.2	63.9	46
Monthly	1.7	0.0	4.3	0.0	1.4	1
Policy Council[a]						
Never	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Once a year	7.8	10.3	4.1	10.4	8.3	6
A few times a year	84.8	86.4	86.9	73.6	86.1	62
Monthly	7.3	3.3	9.0	16.1	5.6	4
Board of Directors or Governing Body[a]						
Never	1.3	2.0	0.0	2.8	2.8	2
Once a year	16.4	13.7	22.5	8.0	12.5	9
A few times a year	79.7	81.0	77.5	81.1	81.9	59
Monthly	2.7	3.3	0.0	8.0	2.8	2

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions C10, C11, and C12.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question had one nonresponse, so the total sample size is 72.

Grantees' Views on Their Capacity to Collect, Analyze, and Use Data and Information Related to School Readiness Goals (Part 1)

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Have technology needed to manage and analyze data						
1 (strongly disagree)	1.7	3.5	0.0	0.0	2.7	2
2	5.5	8.1	4.2	0.0	5.5	4
3	17.5	12.4	15.5	41.0	16.4	12
4	38.6	40.0	45.1	15.2	38.4	28
5 (strongly agree)	36.8	36.0	35.3	43.9	37.0	27
Mean	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.0	4.0	73
Have staff knowledgeable about collecting valid, reliable data						
1 (strongly disagree)	0.7	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.4	1
2	6.4	10.8	0.0	9.8	6.9	5
3	27.7	18.7	28.7	55.7	28.8	21
4	46.6	48.3	58.5	6.7	41.1	30
5 (strongly agree)	18.6	20.7	12.8	27.8	21.9	16
Mean	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.8	73
Need help defining questions to answer with data						
1 (strongly disagree)	25.9	35.6	12.7	30.1	30.1	22
2	37.8	12.2	71.8	28.7	28.8	21
3	18.5	25.7	4.1	34.9	23.3	17
4	13.2	16.8	11.4	6.2	12.3	9
5 (strongly agree)	4.6	9.7	0.0	0.0	5.5	4
Mean	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.2	2.3	73

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions C2a through C2c.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

Grantees' Views on Their Capacity to Collect, Analyze, and Use Data and Information Related to School Readiness Goals (Part 2)

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	**Both HS and EHS**	**Head Start only**	**Early Head Start only**	**% of all grantees**	**Sample size**
Have staff knowledgeable about interpreting data reports						
1 (strongly disagree)	0.7	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.4	1
2	12.5	13.1	4.4	32.9	12.3	9
3	52.9	50.2	64.7	28.9	52.1	38
4	26.3	29.2	26.9	15.0	24.7	18
5 (strongly agree)	7.6	6.0	4.1	23.1	9.6	7
Mean	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.3	73
Do not have enough staff to collect needed data[a]						
1 (strongly disagree)	40.9	40.1	49.0	21.2	40.3	29
2	19.9	20.5	17.4	24.7	20.8	15
3	17.9	14.3	20.2	23.1	13.9	10
4	8.8	11.1	8.5	2.3	11.1	8
5 (strongly agree)	12.5	14.1	5.0	28.8	13.9	10
Mean	2.3	2.4	2.0	2.9	2.4	72

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions C2d through C2e.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question had one nonresponse, so the sample size is 72.

TABLE 13

Grantees' Use of Aggregate Data

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Frequency with which aggregate data are produced and used[a]						
Daily	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Weekly	7.0	7.7	8.5	0.0	8.2	6
Monthly	16.6	10.8	26.5	8.0	15.1	11
A few times a year	76.5	81.5	64.9	92.0	76.7	56
Once a year	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Never	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Staff using aggregate information						
Only teachers	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Only managers	4.1	4.9	0.0	13.2	5.5	4
Both managers and teachers	95.9	95.2	100.0	86.8	94.5	69
Looks at point-in-time data[b]	59.5	63.9	63.6	32.9	58.9	73
Looks at within-school-year longitudinal data[b]	91.4	89.6	95.8	85.0	90.4	73
Looks at across-school-year longitudinal data[b]	58.7	60.7	59.8	49.0	60.3	73

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions C6, C7, and C13.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] Among grantees operating both Head Start and Early Head Start, Early Head Start focal respondents had values closer to those reported by Early Head Start–only grantees, and Head Start focal respondents had values closer to those reported by Head Start–only grantees.

[b] These findings should be interpreted cautiously. The survey question for these items was "When you look at aggregate data, is it for one point in time, over the course of a program year, or across different program years?" Respondents were permitted to volunteer more than one answer. It is unclear how many respondents understood the question was referring to longitudinal data and that they could volunteer more than one answer.

TABLE 14

Grantees' Views of Challenges in Analyzing and Using School Readiness Data

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Analyzing data related to goals						
Big challenge	21.7	33.7	9.0	16.6	21.9	16
Medium challenge	42.5	31.9	51.6	52.8	38.4	28
Small challenge	18.7	21.1	13.4	25.9	21.9	16
Not a challenge at all	17.1	13.3	26.0	4.7	17.8	13
Finding measures that align with goals						
Big challenge	10.5	12.5	9.0	8.0	8.2	6
Medium challenge	13.4	12.8	17.6	3.9	11.0	8
Small challenge	30.9	33.7	28.3	28.7	32.9	24
Not a challenge at all	45.2	41.1	45.2	59.4	48.0	35
Interpreting data to understand children's progress						
Big challenge	8.2	10.8	4.2	10.4	8.2	6
Medium challenge	40.7	41.6	36.2	50.0	39.7	29
Small challenge	23.4	21.8	31.5	6.2	21.9	16
Not a challenge at all	27.8	25.8	28.2	33.5	30.1	22
Making sure to account for circumstances of certain groups (e.g., dual-language learners or children with special needs)						
Big challenge	18.8	19.4	13.2	32.9	17.8	13
Medium challenge	33.3	32.7	35.9	28.0	30.1	22
Small challenge	25.4	24.6	28.5	19.3	27.4	20
Not a challenge at all	22.5	23.4	22.4	19.8	24.7	18

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions C14a through C14d.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

TABLE 15

Staff Responsible for Compiling Information Shared with Others to Report Overall Progress on

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Executive leadership	46.3	54.0	32.5	57.0	48.6	72
Education coordinator or manager	53.8	38.1	74.4	51.9	50.0	72
Educational support or supervision team	12.0	16.7	9.2	3.9	13.9	72
Other coordinator or manager	4.7	6.5	4.2	0.0	5.6	72
Data/research/evaluation/outcomes managers and staff	14.4	20.7	11.9	0.0	13.9	72

Goals

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, question E1.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question had one nonresponse, so the sample size for each item is 72.

TABLE 16

Grantees' Modes and Frequency of Reporting Progress Toward Goals

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Modes used to report progress[a]						
Written reports	18.1	16.5	16.0	29.2	19.4	14
Presentations	3.6	0.0	9.0	0.0	1.4	1
Both	78.4	83.5	75.0	70.8	79.2	57
Neither	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Content of reports covering school readiness goals[b]						
Reports that focus specifically on goals	27.5	23.3	31.7	30.6	25.4	18
Reports that focus on many topics and address goals	26.9	36.4	19.0	15.6	29.6	21
Both types of reports address goals	45.6	40.3	49.4	53.9	45.1	32
Frequency with which written information on progress toward goals will be produced[b]						
Annually	19.5	16.3	24.7	16.5	16.9	12
A few times a year	78.0	81.2	75.3	74.1	78.9	56
Monthly	2.6	2.6	0.0	9.4	4.2	3
Frequency with which presentations on progress toward goals will be conducted[c]						
Annually	19.3	18.4	24.3	5.5	19.0	11
A few times a year	75.7	75.2	70.5	94.5	75.9	44
Monthly	5.1	6.3	5.2	0.0	5.2	3

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions E2 and E2a through E2c.

Notes: Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question had one nonresponse, so the total sample size is 72.

[b] This question applied only to grantees reporting on progress through written reports, so the total sample size is 71.

[c] This question applied only to grantees reporting on progress through presentations, so the total sample size is 58.

Grantees' Views on Usefulness of School Readiness Goals for Program Planning and Operations (Part 1)

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Program-wide strategic planning						
1 (not at all useful)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
2	1.4	0.0	0.0	10.4	1.4	1
3	10.7	10.4	11.0	10.8	11.0	8
4	32.6	30.6	35.8	30.2	31.5	23
5 (extremely useful)	55.3	59.0	53.2	48.6	56.2	41
Mean	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.4	73
Program budgeting						
1 (not at all useful)	1.5	3.2	0.0	0.0	2.7	2
2	8.3	11.4	0.0	21.2	9.6	7
3	36.3	27.5	45.2	41.4	34.3	25
4	29.5	13.8	50.8	22.3	26.0	19
5 (extremely useful)	24.5	44.2	4.1	15.1	27.4	20
Mean	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.3	3.7	73
Decisions made by Policy Council[a]						
1 (not at all useful)	3.0	3.3	0.0	10.4	2.8	2
2	11.8	9.8	11.9	18.3	12.5	9
3	27.8	26.8	28.5	29.2	26.4	19
4	37.3	40.5	43.6	8.6	38.9	28
5 (extremely useful)	20.1	19.6	16.0	33.5	19.4	14
Mean	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.6	72
Staff professional development						
1 (not at all useful)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
2	1.9	4.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	1
3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
4	28.4	14.6	44.8	28.8	24.7	18
5 (extremely useful)	69.7	81.4	55.2	71.2	74.0	54
Mean	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.7	73

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions D2a through D2d.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question had one nonresponse, so the total sample size is 72.

Grantees' Views on Usefulness of School Readiness Goals for Program Planning and Operations (Part 2)

	Weighted Values (%)			Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Day-to-day program management						
1 (not at all useful)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
2	5.9	9.4	0.0	10.4	5.5	4
3	16.1	19.1	9.4	24.6	20.6	15
4	48.8	37.0	64.5	44.3	45.2	33
5 (extremely useful)	29.3	34.4	26.1	20.8	28.8	21
Mean	4.0	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.0	73
Teachers' planning for daily classroom activities[a]						
1 (not at all useful)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
2	4.1	7.8	0.0	3.0	6.3	4
3	4.8	3.6	8.0	0.0	3.1	2
4	32.2	17.3	43.6	51.3	28.1	18
5 (extremely useful)	58.9	71.3	48.4	45.6	62.5	40
Mean	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.5	64
Teachers' work with individual children[b]						
1 (not at all useful)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
2	5.9	12.2	0.0	0.0	6.4	4
3	6.6	6.4	8.0	3.2	6.4	4
4	27.2	14.8	38.2	39.5	23.8	15
5 (extremely useful)	60.4	66.6	53.8	57.3	63.5	40
Mean	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.4	63
Home visitors' work with individual children[c]						
1 (not at all useful)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
2	6.6	9.4	0.0	0.0	7.0	3
3	18.6	25.5	0.0	3.6	18.6	8
4	26.3	13.0	100.0	40.0	23.3	10
5 (extremely useful)	48.5	52.1	0.0	56.4	51.2	22
Mean	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.5	4.2	43

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions D2e through D2g.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question had nine nonresponses, so the total sample size is 64.

[b] This question had 10 nonresponses, so the total sample size is 63.

[c] This question applied only to grantees with a home-based program option (n = 43), and it had zero nonresponses, so the total sample size is 43.

TABLE 18

Ages of Children Served

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	**Both HS and EHS**	**Head Start only**	**Early Head Start only**	**% of all grantees**	**Sample size**
Children served with Head Start funding[a]						
Three-year olds	100.0	100.0	100.0	N/A	100.0	59
Four-year olds	100.0	100.0	100.0	N/A	100.0	59
Five-year olds	72.5	81.3	62.0	N/A	76.3	59
Children served with Early Head Start funding[b]						
Infants under 12 months old	98.5	98.1	N/A	100.0	98.2	54
One-year olds	100.0	100.0	N/A	100.0	100.0	54
Two-year olds	100.0	100.0	N/A	100.0	100.0	54
Three-year olds	76.9	73.8	N/A	87.3	77.8	54
Pregnant women served with Early Head Start funding[c]	87.5	88.1	N/A	85.8	86.8	53

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions A1, A2, and A3.

Notes: N/A = not applicable. Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question applied only to grantees operating a Head Start program, so the sample size for these items is 59.

[b] This question applied only to grantees operating an Early Head Start program and there was one nonresponse, so the sample size for these items is 54.

[c] This question applied only to grantees operating an Early Head Start program and there were two nonresponses, so the sample size is 53.

TABLE 19

Program Options Offered

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Head Start program options[a]						
Center-based	98.1	100.0	95.8	N/A	98.3	59
Home-based	29.5	44.8	11.2	N/A	33.9	59
Combination	10.4	8.1	13.2	N/A	8.5	59
Family child care	2.0	0.0	4.4	N/A	1.7	59
Local design	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	0.0	59
Early Head Start program options[b]						
Center-based	87.1	87.0	N/A	87.3	85.2	54
Home-based	77.0	76.7	N/A	77.7	75.9	54
Combination	14.5	16.5	N/A	8.0	13.0	54
Family child care	8.2	9.0	N/A	5.7	7.4	54
Local design	5.7	7.4	N/A	0.0	3.7	54

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions A4 and A5.

Notes: N/A = not applicable. Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

[a] This question applied only to grantees operating a Head Start program, so the sample size for these items is 59.

[b] This question applied only to grantees operating an Early Head Start program and there was one nonresponse, so the sample size for these items is 54.

TABLE 20

Respondent Characteristics

	Weighted Values (%)				Unweighted Values	
	All grantees	Both HS and EHS	Head Start only	Early Head Start only	% of all grantees	Sample size
Highest level of education completed						
Some college	3.3	1.2	7.0	0.0	2.7	2
Associate degree	4.5	0.0	11.4	0.0	2.7	2
Bachelor's degree	36.3	32.6	43.8	27.2	35.6	26
Master's degree	54.0	62.0	37.8	72.8	56.2	41
PhD	1.9	4.1	0.0	0.0	2.7	2
Number of staff that directly report to respondent						
None	5.6	12.0	0.0	0.0	6.9	5
1–4	14.3	15.5	12.8	14.7	16.4	12
5–14	52.5	50.5	53.8	55.2	52.1	38
15–24	14.6	11.9	16.0	19.8	1.7	10
25–49	5.7	1.5	9.0	10.4	4.1	3
50 or more	7.4	8.7	8.4	0.0	6.9	5
Tenure in current position						
Less than 6 months	5.9	8.8	4.3	0.0	6.9	5
6–12 months	2.6	4.7	0.0	2.8	4.1	3
1–3 years	30.0	24.1	37.1	29.6	31.5	23
4–9 years	43.8	34.6	47.3	65.3	38.4	28
10 years or longer	17.8	27.7	11.3	2.3	19.2	14
Length of time working with Head Start or Early Head Start Programs						
Less than 1 year	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
1–3 years	13.7	11.3	12.6	24.9	13.7	10
4–9 years	13.6	10.5	14.0	23.1	12.3	9
10 years or longer	72.7	78.2	73.4	52.0	74.0	54

Source: School readiness goals and Head Start program functioning telephone survey, questions F1, F3, A9, and A10.

Notes: Raking weights were applied to adjust for potential bias introduced by survey nonresponses and oversampling of grantees with particular characteristics of interest. The weights ensure the distribution of the sample used for estimation closely matches the distribution of the sampling population on the 10 characteristics in the algorithm. Subgroup results (without significance tests) are presented for exploratory purposes and should be interpreted with caution. The sampling design makes variance estimation challenging and, given the small sample size, the data have limited power to detect any but the largest differences.

Notes

1. The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 can be found at https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/law.

2. Part 1307 of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (USDHHS 2009) can be found at http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/hspps/1307.

3. The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (USDHHS 2012a) can be found at http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/sr/approach/cdelf.

4. Program instructions for school readiness in programs serving preschool children are available at https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/pi/2011/resour_pri_004_110811.html.

5. The percentage of grantees using Teaching Strategies GOLD is based on the authors' tabulations of Program Information Report data for 2011–12.

6. AIAN grantees are included in the study as a separate subsample so the distinctive experiences of this group of grantees could be explored in greater detail.

7. Migrant and seasonal HS/EHS grantees were excluded from the study because differences in service delivery approach would have required the design of different survey and interview instruments and the inclusion of a sufficient sample to analyze them separately.

8. Grantees with upcoming triennial monitoring visits were dropped if the schedule of the upcoming visit would conflict with the scheduling of the site visit for this study and/or if the grantee with an upcoming visit was potentially eligible for the sampling frame for another ACF-funded research study (the Evaluation of the Designation Renewal System).

9. For budgetary reasons, site visits focused on states within the continental United States.

10. The revised protocols were reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L.104-13). The public notice in the Federal Register (published January 16, 2013) can be found at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-01-16/pdf/2013-00593.pdf, and approval was granted on August 29, 2013.

11. Other grantees may have used other documents or methods to ensure that their program's school readiness goals were aligned with their state's early learning guidelines defining school readiness for preschool children. Preparing one document that shows both program goals and state early learning guidelines may be particularly important for programs that combine Head Start slots with state-funded early education and care slots.

12. Other grantees may have had benchmarks in documents not submitted to the study team; however, most of the programs visited by the study team did not explicitly set benchmarks.

13. Some assessment tools, such as TS GOLD, present student progress in terms of developmental norms; "green bands," for example, indicate the normal developmental skill range, with other colors indicating delays of varying severity.

14. Head Start Act, section 641A(g)(2)(A).

15. http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-11-09/pdf/2011-28880.pdf.

16. School Readiness in Programs Serving Preschool Children ACF-PI-HS-11-04. https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/pi/2011/resour_pri_004_110811.html.

17. Differences between EHs-only and HS-only grantees should be interpreted with caution due to small sample sizes.

18. Each of the "more commonly used assessments" was a tool specifically recognized as an assessment tool (as compared to a screening tool) and was used by 50 or more grantees according to Program Information Report data for the sampling frame. Grantees using multiple assessment tools are coded in the first of these three categories for which they qualify.

19. Some respondents used the term "TA specialist" to refer broadly to assistance provided by state T/TA specialists and regional Head Start program managers and specialists, without distinguishing between them.

20. A supplemental analysis comparing all Head Start responses (HS-only and HS/EHS grantees reporting on HS programs) to all Early Head Start responses (EHS-only and HS/EHS grantees reporting on EHS programs) found that 74 percent of HS grantees compared to 54 percent of EHS grantees agreed they had the information needed to set goals.

21. In brief, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 required teachers who did not have a bachelor's (BA) or advanced degree in early childhood to have an associate's degree by October 1, 2011, and further required that at least 50 percent of Head Start teachers have a BA or advanced degree in early childhood, or in a related area with preschool teaching experience, by September 30, 2013. The act also imposed increased requirements for education services managers.

22. The telephone survey was conducted from October 2013 through January 2014, shortly after Head Start grantees were affected by sequestration.

23. Part 1307 of the Head Start Program Performance Standards can be found at http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/hspps/1307.

24. A supplemental analysis comparing all Early Head Start responses (EHS-only and HS/EHS grantees reporting on EHS programs) to all Head Start responses (HS-only and HS/EHS grantees reporting on HS programs) found that 34 percent of EHS grantees reported not having enough staff to collect data, compared to only 14 percent of HS grantees. The same analysis showed 22 percent of EHS grantees compared to 8 percent of HS grantees did not think their staff were knowledgeable in interpreting data reports.

25. Many governing bodies were responsible for oversight of multiple programs, including Head Start, perhaps explaining why many members focused on fiscal issues and were less familiar with school readiness goals.

26. In 2012, the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation awarded the Urban Institute a contract to conduct a study on Head Start Leadership, Excellence, and Data Systems (LEADS) that more specifically focused on the ways grantees use data for ongoing program planning and management and on the factors that seem to contribute to effective data use.

27. A supplemental analysis comparing all Head Start grantees (HS-only and HS/EHS grantees reporting on HS programs) to all Early Head Start responses (EHS-only and HS/EHS grantees reporting on EHS programs) found that 99 percent of HS grantees and 81 percent of EHS grantees agreed that having school readiness goals would be useful.

28. The 1998 amendments to the Head Start Act required grantees to incorporate measurement of program outcomes into their self-assessment and further required grantee monitoring to incorporate examination of how grantees are tracking and making use of data on child and program outcomes.

29. Most notably, because one of the sampling goals was to identify a backup for each sample member that would maintain the targeted mix of characteristics across the sample even in the case of refusals that needed to be replaced, strata were more likely to be chosen if they included more than one grantee. Thus, grantees that did not have a "match" on most (if not all) nine independent characteristics were less likely to be selected (though some grantees were selected when an exact match could not be found).

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