

Our mission is to coalesce, inspire and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.



Developing Data Capacity

A Hiring Guide

Introduction

Why Do Head Start Programs Need Data and Analytic Capacity?

All Head Start programs need to collect and analyze data and other information to find ways to improve their operations. Bringing continuous improvement to the field means using data, evidence, and evaluation at all levels.

Why Do I Need This Toolkit?

Building capacity to use data to make better decisions is not a one-time, quick-fix project. It will require an organizational shift that will take time and require deliberate changes in process, capacity, and approach.

How Do I Use It?

NHSA has developed this toolkit to guide Head Start programs through thinking about the data skills they need, the skills they have or could develop on staff, and how to hire for or buy data skills. Remember, everyone will find different pieces of this toolkit useful, so feel free to focus only on the elements that meet your program’s needs.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Learn about why and how you should be implementing data tools and processes in your Head Start program

Assessment of Current Needs 3

Evaluate where your program is currently and where you should start your data journey

Identifying Short- and Long-term Goals

In Development

Learn how to set up your program for success by setting goals and building buy-in before you start

Hiring Staff vs. Contracting 7

Assess whether your program is better suited for hiring new data literate staff or working with data consultants

Sample Job Descriptions 8

Review draft language for various data-related job descriptions and learn where to recruit data staff

Utilizing Consultants 13

Learn about Request for Proposals, review draft language, and explore lessons for hiring consultants

Glossary 17

Catch up on some of the common lingo used in the data analysis world

Toolkit Content



Methods to Demonstrate & Improve Effectiveness



Data Quality

Assess the current quality of your data and identify inaccurate, untimely, or inaccessible data. Identify cost-effective ways to fix the problems identified.



Data Analysis

Analyze your data to identify trends, outliers, relationships, and anomalies, all of which signal potential opportunities to improve program effectiveness or areas for improvement.



Data Collection and Design

Identify and implement simpler ways to enter data that facilitates minimally burdensome collection and accurate and timely entry.



Data System Management

Make the most of each management information system to glean as much knowledge from it as possible.



Data Integration

Bring data from various sources (such as your data management, child assessment, HR, and finance systems) together to identify opportunities for improvement areas in need of attention.



Data-Driven Decision Making Training

Bring data and data analysis into your program's decision-making processes to guide improvement efforts.



Data Visualization

Visualize data, using graphs, charts, and other methods to make it understandable to teachers, managers, parents, and other stakeholders.