

MONTANA HEAD START COLLABORATION OFFICE 2017 NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY 2017

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**Montana Head Start
Collaboration Office**



Introduction

The Head Start Act (as amended December 12, 2007) requires the Head Start Collaboration Offices (HSCOs) to conduct an annual needs assessment of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees. The purpose of the 2017 Head Start Collaboration Needs Assessment is to evaluate perceptions held by Head Start and Early Head Start programs, as to inform strategic planning for the year. The Office of Head Start does not specify the methodology or instrument used to collect information. Head Start Collaboration Office directors do have a common resource and guidance they can follow on the ECLKC website portal, but guidance is optional. The HSCO is currently using a needs assessment which covers all priority areas and yearly has minor changes that assess the needs of programs through state focus areas. At the end of this report is a comparison table of the last three years needs assessment data.

The goal is to simply assess how Head Start and Early Head Start programs collectively respond to the various priority areas, as listed by the Office of Head Start. The Montana Head Start Collaboration Office continued this year with a series of questions that directly correlate with the priority areas. There are also questions tailored to assessing perceived strengths and challenges.

The 2017 Needs Assessment is comprehensive of 2 data sources:

1. Survey Analysis & Findings: The survey was conducted via Survey Monkey in 2017 and distributed to all Head Start and Early Head Start directors in the State of Montana.
2. Program Information Report (PIR) Statewide Data findings conducted by the Office of Head Start

Purpose

The intent of this report is to understand the landscape of Head Start and Early Head Start in Montana, identify key findings that support ongoing collaboration, or the development of new collaborations as well as the development of recommendations, based on the two data sources. The recommendations are what will drive the work of the Head Start Collaboration in the upcoming year, and will inform state and local partners about Head Start and Early Head Start perceptions and needs across the state.

The Head Start Collaboration Office utilized a survey to collect information from local Head Start and Early Head Start grantees. The purpose of the survey was to gain a deeper understanding of how Head Start and Early Head Start grantees experience collaboration with state and local agencies. Additionally, it was to understand where the Head Start community would like to see efforts focused in the upcoming year. The same survey was used to collect data this year as last year to assess improvement in collaboration, as well as a shift in where collective and collaborative efforts are executed.

Respondents

In May and June 2017, Head Start directors were invited to participate in the Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) needs assessment survey. Directors were encouraged to participate, but if they could not fill out the survey or wanted to provide more input from their program, they were encouraged to send it on to other staff.

20 people participated in the survey, all but one self-identified in the survey. All answers were de-identified in this summary. It appears, from information provided, that all but 5 Early Head Start/Head Start programs from both Region VIII and Region XI in Montana participated in this survey.

Findings

A note on the analysis: Findings are based on responses to a non-scientific survey, developed from a collective tool available to Head Start Collaboration Offices with Montana specific additions. The results, though informative, are not to be considered representative of all Head Start and Early Head Start employees in Montana. The purpose is to simply inform the Head Start Collaboration Office and other partners, for use in ongoing planning.

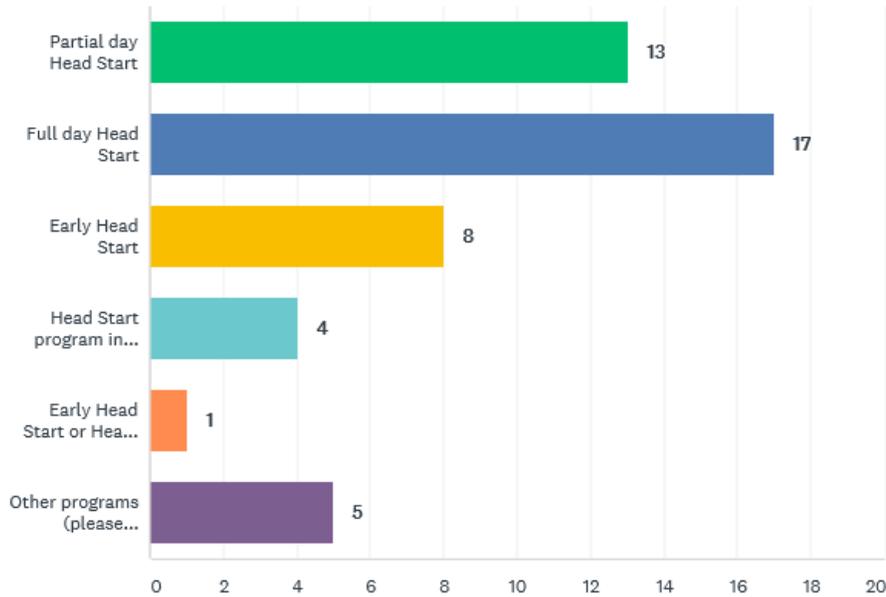
Programs Offered

Respondents were asked to characterize the programs they currently have or expect to have in place by 2018. Many offer more than one program or program model. All 20 respondents answered this question. 5 programs answered

other which include EHS-CCP, Early Head Start Partial Day, wrap around after school for preschool, Montana Preschool Development Classrooms and Preschool.

Please check all program models you currently offer or you plan to offer in your agency by 2018.

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



Early Head Start & Head Start Assets and Barriers

High quality EHS/HS programs need significant resources: human, community, technical, and financial, in order to be successful. Survey respondents were asked to list assets and barriers that foster high quality programs. The answers are grouped in order of frequency and de-identified to ensure program confidentiality.

Assets

Survey respondents were given an open-ended opportunity to identify assets that help maintain and improve their high-quality programs. Eleven responded with one or more assets. These have been de-identified into general categories and are listed by the frequency they were mentioned:

- Staff quality (9)
- Grants and financial assistance (3)
- Community collaboration and services (2)
- Staff retention (2)
- Regulations (1)
- Participation in STARS (1)

Barriers

Respondents were also asked an open-ended question about barriers to high quality programs. Fifteen respondents offered one or more barriers. The responses have been de-identified and placed in general categories, listed in order of frequency mentioned:

- Staff retention/staff turnover (7)
- Funding for programs, lack of state funding for EHS and HS (5)
- Staff wages too low (3)

- Finding and hiring qualified staff (2). A variety of reasons including wages, educational requirements, and lack of locally qualified staff were given
- Gaps in child protective system (1)
- Professional development (1)
- Meeting the full day standards (1)
- Lack of community approach to substance abuse and child welfare (1)
- Challenging behaviors (1)

Staff retention/turnover and funding and monetary issues are the largest barriers and appear to be major factors in hiring qualified staff in some communities. Finding qualified staff is also an ongoing issue. In some communities, qualified people are not available. In other communities, qualified candidates are available, but Head Start wages are not competitive. It also appears that the level of difficulty of the positions influences staff retention.

Potential HSCO Roles

Respondents were asked to identify something that would be helpful for HSCO to address in the next year. To identify specific answers, the answers are listed in general categories listed in order of frequency of response. The responses were:

- Professional Development (4)
- Promote alignment of QRIS and Subsidy with HS standards (2)
- Partner and collaborate with agencies, other entities (1)
- Funding for EHS/HS programs (1)
- Promote awareness of and advocacy for EHS/HS (1)
- Promote workforce development in early childhood education (1)
- Support new administrators (1)
- Open communication (1)

Several respondents listed items that are not within HSCO’s purview, but are clearly things that HSCO might have a system level role in supporting. The Montana Head Start Association (MTHSA) also has a strong role in several of the proposed high priority activities.

Collaboration with Partners Q5 and Q6

Respondents were asked to identify the level of collaboration between the local EHS/HS program and the community partner. The most frequent response is highlighted in green. In a few cases, the most frequent response is the same in more than one category.

Critical to the success of Head Start programs are strong working relationships with partners. Twenty of the 20 respondents answered this question.

Answer Options	High-level collaboration	Moderate collaboration	Limited collaboration	No collaboration	Not applicable
Local Education Agencies - Transitions	10	5	3	0	0
Local Education Agencies - Part B	11	4	2	0	0
Local Education Agencies- Transition	13	5	2	0	0
Local Education Agencies - Part B	11	7	2	0	0
Early Intervention - Part C	9	8	3	0	0
Mon tana Preschool Development Grant	10	2	1	3	4
Child Care R&R Agencies	4	8	4	2	2
Head Start T/TA	8	10	2	0	0
STARS to Quality (QRIS) coaches	6	3	6	3	2
STARS to Quality Consultants	3	5	6	4	2
Child care licensing	5	5	2	5	3
Striving Readers	2	2	3	3	10
Local Best Beginnings/ Early Childhood Coalition Efforts	7	6	4	2	1

Answer Options	High-level collaboration	Moderate collaboration	Limited collaboration	No collaboration	Not applicable
Libraries and/or museums	2	9	6	2	1
Child Care Centers (for continuation of full-day, year-round services)	3	4	6	3	4
Infant & Toddler Mental Health Services	4	5	5	0	6
3-5-year-old Mental Health Services	8	4	3	1	3
Mental Health Counseling Services	8	7	4	1	0
Homelessness Services	5	5	8	1	1
Transitional Housing	4	3	7	3	2
Parenting Classes	7	8	4	1	0
SNAP (food stamps)	6	9	5	0	0
Healthy Montana Kids (CHIP, HMK, HMK+)	6	6	8	0	0
WIC	9	6	3	1	0
TANF	10	5	5	0	0
CACFP (Child and adult care food program)	18	1	0	1	0
No Kid Hungry	0	7	6	4	3
Food Pantries	3	9	3	4	1
Local Health Department	14	5	1	0	0
Additional Home Visiting (i.e. MIECHV)	5	4	6	1	4
Community Health Centers	7	7	2	0	4
Pediatric Practices/Clinics	7	7	3	1	2
Dental Home Providers	9	8	2	1	0
Child Protective Services	9	6	4	1	0
Military Family Liaisons	0	3	9	15	3
Domestic Violence agency	1	11	8	0	0

Respondents were also asked to list specific collaborations that need to be strengthened in the next year. 14 offered one or more answers. Answers were de-identified and are presented here in general categories:

- Mental health organizations and services (4)
- Child care Licensing (3)
- Child protective services (3)
- Community Health Centers (3)
- STARS (3)
- Homelessness/Housing organizations (3)
- Parenting (2)
- Childcare Scholarships (1)
- CACFP (1)
- LEA (1)

Program Impacts of Federal Priorities

Respondents were asked to rate the impact that each of the five federal and regional priorities had on their program. 18 of 20 respondents rated at least one priority. The highest frequency answer is highlighted in green.

New HSCO Priorities: Please indicate the level of impact each of these priorities has on your EHS/HS program.

Answer Options	Major impact	Moderate impact	Limited Impact	Response Count
Partner with state child care systems, emphasizing EHS-CC partnerships	5	5	8	18
Work with state efforts to collect data regarding early childhood education programs and child outcomes	10	7	1	18
Support the expansion and access to high quality workforce and career development opportunities for staff, including recruitment and retention	13	4	1	18
Collaborate with QRIS (STARS to Quality program)	13	4	1	18
Work with state school system to ensure continuity	10	7	1	18
<i>answered question</i>				18
<i>skipped question</i>				2

Respondents were strong in their assessment of the level of impact of the support of expansion and access to high quality workforce and career development opportunities and the level of impact on collaborate with “STARS to Quality” with almost all respondents in the major to moderate impact and the majority in Major impact. This is a change from last year probably due to the new HSPPS requirement about involvement in the state QRIS system. This area will be important to watch as the state and EHS/HS work together to implement the new HS STARS standards in QRIS. Data coordination also was high in the level of impact.

The majority of respondents thought partnerships between EHS/HS programs and the child care system were of limited impact. This makes sense since there are limited programs involved in the partnership grants at this time.

HSCO-Program Partnerships Role for Federal Priorities Q18

Survey respondents were asked what kind of role each would like the HSCO to play in collaboration with the individual programs, ranging from as-needed communication to ongoing, extensive collaboration on projects.

New HSCO Priorities: Please choose the role that best characterizes the level of partnership you would like to have between your program and the State Collaboration Office on the following five HSCO priorities in the next year.

Answer Options	Information shared from HSCO office on an "as-needed" basis.	Regular communication between my program and HSCO office	Work on specific projects or objectives within this priority	Ongoing collaboration and work	Response Count
Partner with State child care systems, emphasizing EHS-CC Partnerships	10	4	0	4	18
Work with state efforts to collect data regarding early childhood education (ECE) programs and child outcomes.	5	9	2	2	18
Support the expansion and access to high quality workforce and career development opportunities	6	6	5	2	19

Answer Options	Information shared from HSCO office on an "as-needed" basis.	Regular communication between my program and HSCO office	Work on specific projects or objectives within this priority	Ongoing collaboration and work	Response Count
for staff, including staff recruitment and retention					
Collaborate with QRIS (STARS to Quality program)	4	8	4	3	19
Work with the state school system to ensure continuity	6	7	2	3	18
Comments					1
<i>answered question</i>					19

Factors that may be driving these choices may include differences in resources, experience, or program level assessment of the most effective use of its resources. However, without further follow-up, it isn't possible to say which factors are most important for any particular program. The results do tend to suggest that two types of partnerships between HSCO and the individual programs should be expected: most programs will be interested in regular communication, while a smaller group will be interested in more in-depth participation on areas important to them.

Professional Development

Professional development was identified by most respondents as a high impact priority. Initial training, ongoing training, and workforce development were all areas that many identified as important. The top three professional development options chosen were: Assistance in connecting to training for new employees or those in new positions, further support from the T/TA providers, and increase in connections to training and coaching within the STARS to Quality program.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Support from T/TA provider to work with Head Start grantees to meet Head Start degree requirements for teachers, assistant teachers, education managers and other staff as described in section 648(a)(2)(A).	47.37%	9
Assistance in connecting Head Start agencies with higher education agencies that provide distance learning programs.	31.58%	6
Assistance in understanding and navigating the state-wide professional development system.	36.84%	7
Assistance in connecting to training opportunities to train new employees and employees taking on new roles within Head Start agencies.	52.63%	10
Increase in connections to training and coaching within the STARS to Quality program.	47.37%	9
Connection and work with career counselors and higher education institutions to increase the number of Head Start teachers, assistant teachers and education managers who meet the Head Start required specifications.	26.32%	5
Other (please specify)	15.79%	3

Specific Professional Development Training

Respondents were invited to identify specific types of trainings and areas of greatest need. Seventeen responded with specific ideas. The responses were deidentified and categorized. The most frequently requested types of training (in order of number of times listed are):

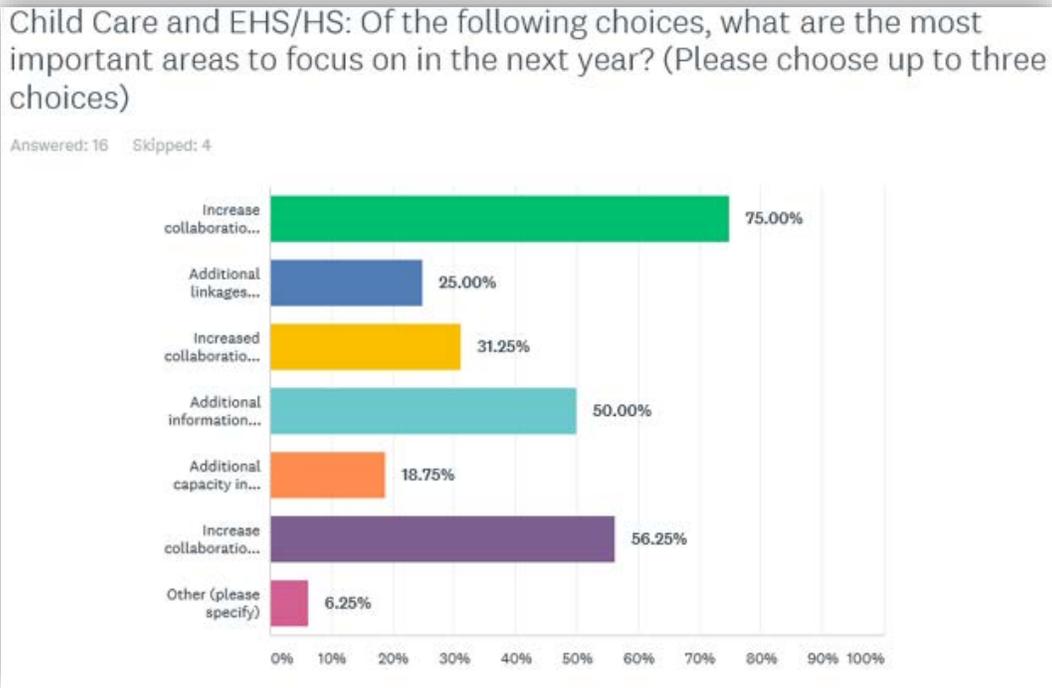
- Training on behavioral strategies (5)
- Parent engagement (5)
- Staff development and training (4)
- Mental health (3)
- Classroom Management (3)
- Compassion fatigue and staff wellness (3)
- STARS Training more frequent and locally provided (2)
- School Readiness (2)
- Practice based coaching (1)
- HS performance Standards (1)
- CLASS (1)
- Curriculum (1)
- Child Development (1)
- Data (1)
- Trauma (1)
- Licensing (1)

Though the HSCO does not provide direct T/TA, it collaborates with trainers across the state and region, and consistently communicates needs to ensure partners who provide training have accurate information about what HS programs are looking for in professional development.

Overall, professional development in all its facets appears to be one of the highest priority areas for EHS/HS programs across the state. Without significant, ongoing workforce development and high quality, targeted training, program directors do not think that ongoing, high quality early childhood education is possible.

Early Head Start and Head Start Collaboration with the Child Care System

Both Early Head Start and Head Start programs identified significant areas for focus in how the child care system and EHS/HS programs aligned. The increased collaboration between OPI and state child care licensing to improve quality and reduce barriers for early childhood programs was the clear top priority. Second was increased collaboration between Governor's Office, Child Care Resource and Referral system, and HS/EHS to promote quality early education programs and additional information about child care quality improvement and licensing initiatives. This is a topic of important ongoing work and the need for ongoing alignment and inclusion has increased due to the new standards.



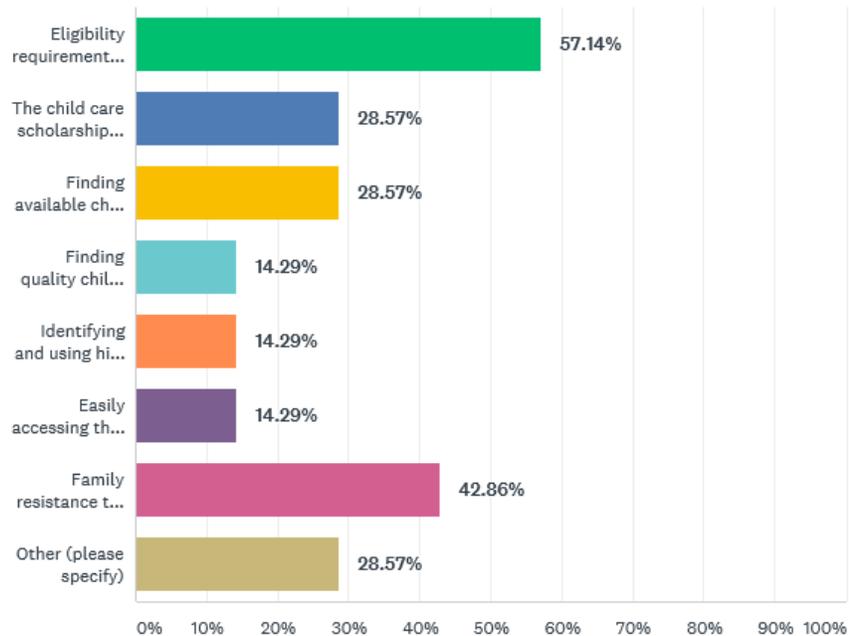
Areas of focus for Early Head Start and Child Care Alignment

Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Increase collaboration between state education agencies and state child care licensing agencies to improve the standards of quality and reduce regulatory barriers facing early childhood programs.	75%	12
Additional linkages between Head Start, local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, and the Early Childhood Services Bureau.	25%	4
Increased collaboration between Head Start agencies and local child care programs to ensure that quality, full-working day and full-calendar year services are available to children and families who need them.	31.25%	5
Additional information about child care quality improvement and licensing initiatives.	50%	8
Additional capacity in child care programs for quality infant-toddler care through linkages with Head Start professional development.	18.75%	3
Increase collaboration between Governor's Office, Child Care Resource and Referral system, and HS/EHS to promote quality early education programs.	56.25%	9
Other	6.25%	1

It appears that the barriers are interconnected. Eligibility requirement differences between EHS and childcare scholarships were the primary reason but then family resistance and other factors were all very close. In practice, however, directors pointed out factors including family inability to complete forms or concerns about eligibility proved problematic in obtaining subsidy.

Early Head Start and Child Care Systems: Please answer this question if you currently have an Early Head Start Child Care Partnership program or plan to have one in place by 2018. What would be the most important areas to focus on so that EHS/CC Partnerships can be aligned to serve EHS families? (Please choose up to three choices)

Answered: 7 Skipped: 13



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Eligibility requirement differences between EHS and child care scholarship requirements.	57.14%	4
The child care scholarship application process.	28.57%	2
Difficulties in finding available child care services that will work with the EHS schedule and family needs.	28.57%	2
Lack of quality child care that will work with the EHS and family work schedule.	14.29%	1
Difficulty in identifying and using high quality child care services in tandem with EHS.	14.29%	1
Difficulties accessing the Child Care Resource and Referral system.	14.29%	1
Family resistance to using child care scholarships.	42.86%	3
Other (please specify)	28.67%	2

Data Collection System

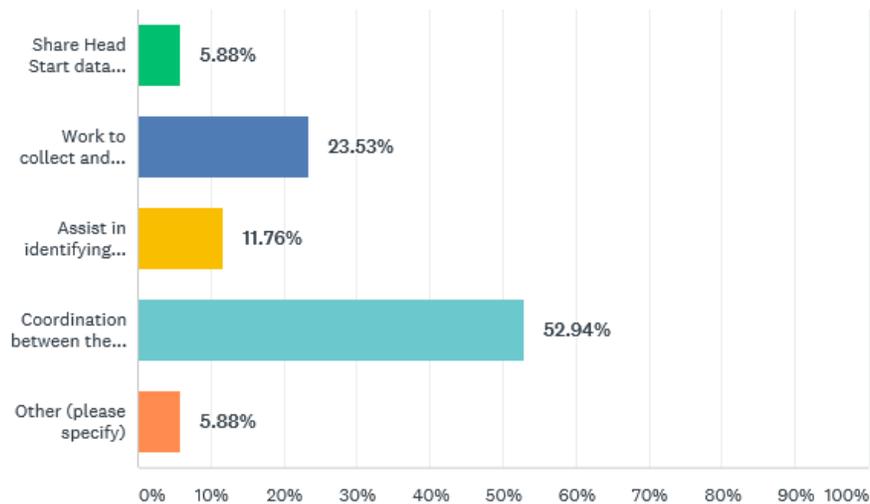
Data collection, particularly of longitudinal data, came up frequently on the survey and in discussion with directors as important.

Improving Ability to Collect Data

Respondents were asked to identify which practices and tools would be most useful to them in data collection and integration.

Data Collection Efforts: Work with state efforts to collect data regarding ECE program and child outcomes. Which one of these would be most helpful to focus on in the next year?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 3



Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Share Head Start data statewide with programs and partners to further Head Start mission.	5.88%	1
Work to collect and share other relevant early childhood data with Head Start programs.	23.53%	4
Assist in identifying training opportunities on effective data collection and interpretation.	11.76%	2
Coordination between the Head Start data system(s) and K-12 systems that includes the assignment of unique State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASIDs) that remain with students throughout their pre-K-12 public education so that Head Start respondents can be included in state data collection efforts, longitudinal studies, and tracking systems to demonstrate long-term educational outcomes.	52.94%	9
Other (please specify)	5.88%	1

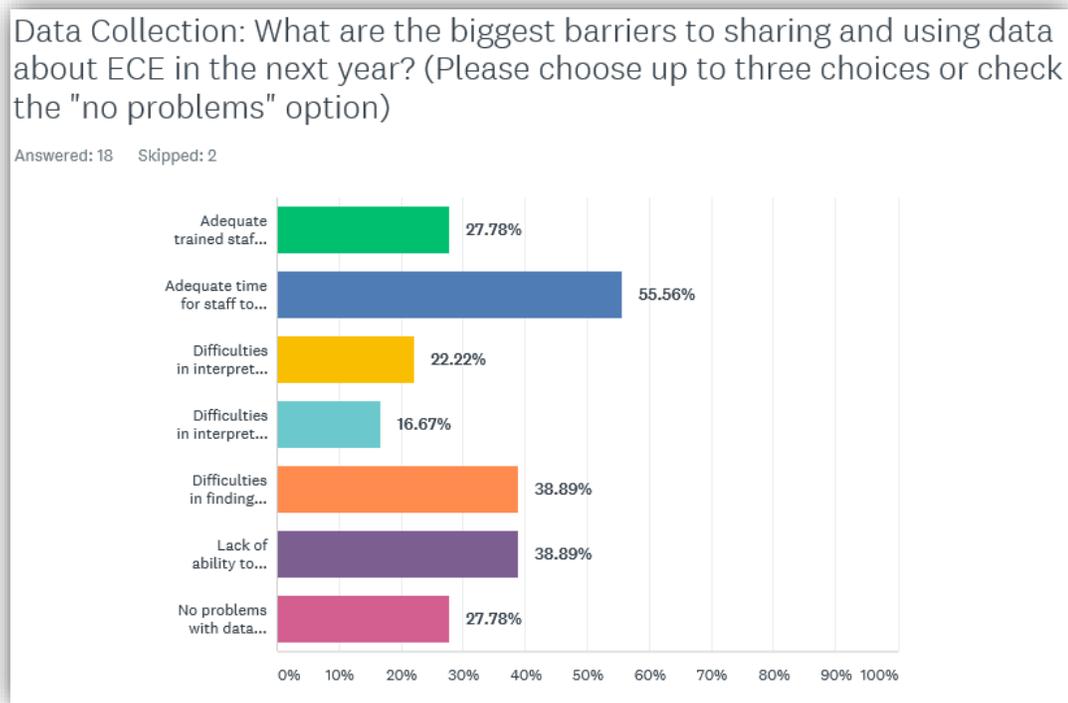
Long-term identification of students was strongly identified as the most important area to address in terms of data in the next year, followed by sharing relevant early childhood data with EHS/HS programs and professional development on effective data collection and interpretation.

Head Start program directors have in the comments that long-term outcome data is critical to evaluating success and to making connections between Head Start and K-12 student success.

Barriers to Collecting Data in EHS/HS Programs

Respondents were also asked to identify the biggest barriers to effective sharing and use of data. Barriers of lack of time to enter and track data was the highest. Difficulties in finding ECE data and lack of ability to track longitudinally were the next highest responses. This has changed from a staff training issue as barriers to more system barriers of data and access. Also of note no problem with data collection increased significantly this year from 1 last year to 5 this year. That is a very positive sign.

The HSCO office cannot directly address the second and third priorities, but it is clear that any system work on streamlining data collections, encouraging professional development and coaching opportunities, and fostering the partnerships needed to implement multi-agency longitudinal data collection will help individual programs.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Adequate trained staff to track and enter data.	27.78%	5
Adequate time for staff to track and enter data.	55.56%	10
Difficulties in interpreting and using data for programmatic assessment.	22.22%	4
Difficulties in interpreting and using data for instructional assessment and interventions.	16.67%	3
Difficulties in finding clear and relevant data on ECE and other factors that affect EHS/HS children.	38.89%	7
Lack of ability to track and use longitudinal data on long-term outcomes.	38.89%	7
No problems with data collection.	27.78%	5

Useful Data

Data is not useful unless users can find and interpret it correctly, and apply it to help identify and address areas of needed program and practice change. Lack of ability to track and use longitudinal data on long-term outcomes are important barriers noted by respondents. Respondents identified types of data most useful to them, listed by the number of times they were mentioned. Specific instances were de-identified from the responses:

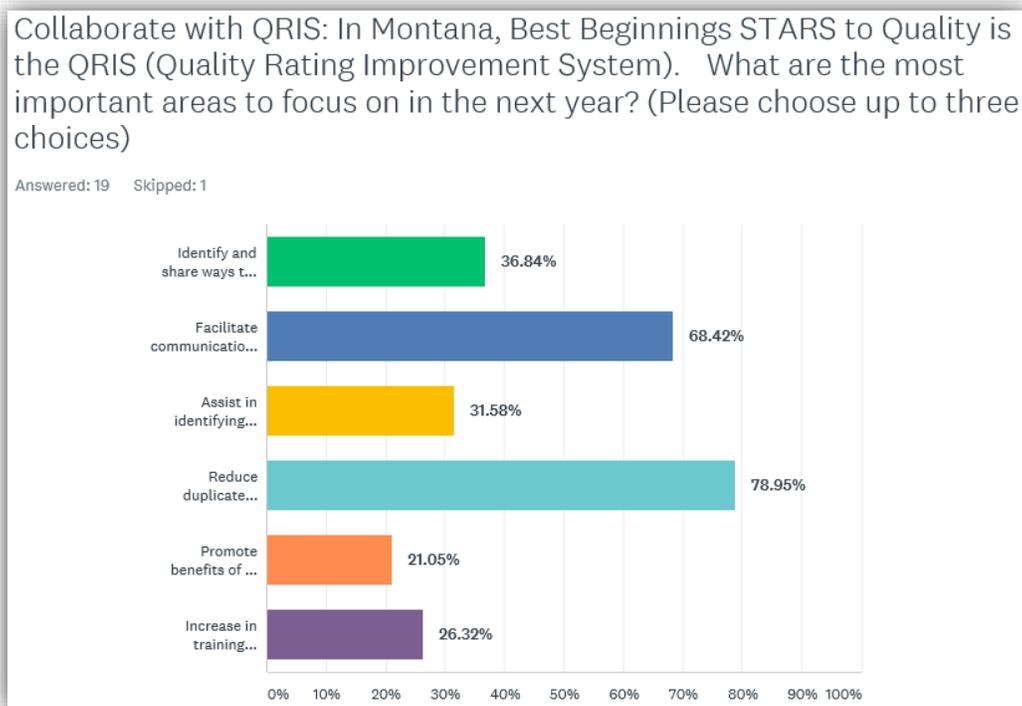
- Workforce data including- employment rates, qualifications and wages across ECE field (5)

- Longitudinal data (4)
- School Readiness data including infant toddler (3)
- Vulnerable population data=-Part C, infant, toddler, maternal, foster care/child welfare system (3)
- Child Care Data - number of closures, # of infant toddler licensed vs actual use, Pre-K programs (3)

Collaboration with STARS to Quality (QRIS)

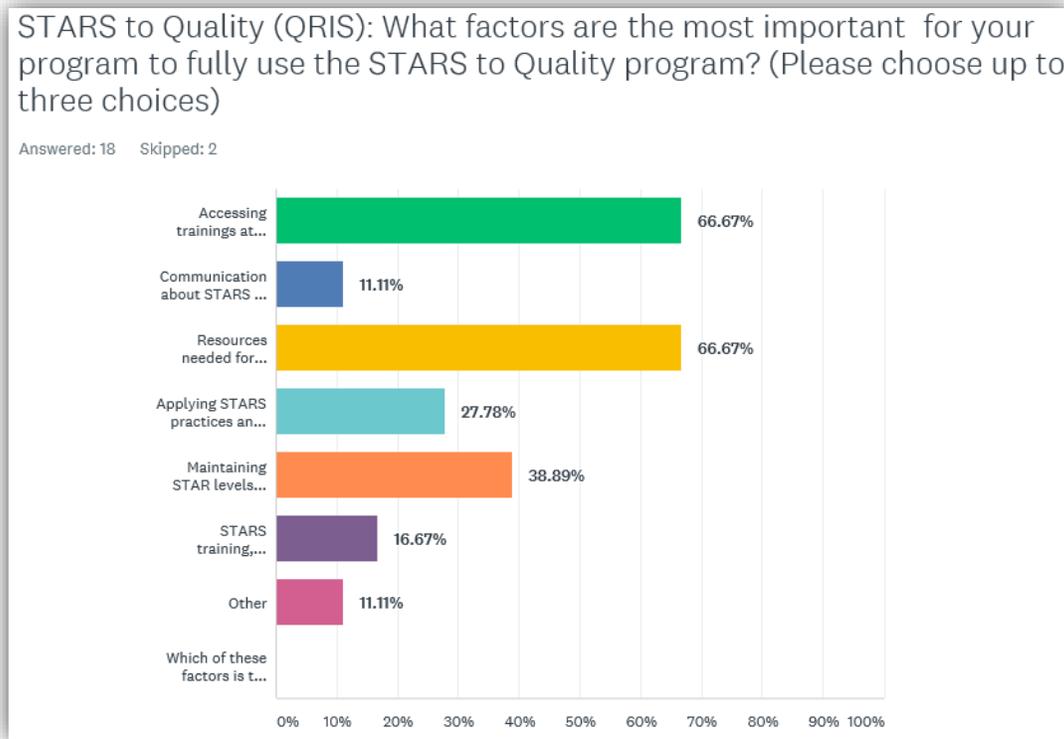
The STARS to Quality program is the QRIS program in Montana. The highest priority in questions about collaboration with QRIS was reduction in duplication of training that Head Start program staff already receive from other sources and second was facilitate communication between Head Start and the STARS to Quality program. Two EHS programs and one HS program left STARS in the last year due to two new policies, one- about non-movement on the trajectory the other required EHS/HS programs to be licensed.

At this time, Tribal programs do not participate in the Montana STARS to Quality program.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Identify and share ways to increase the number of EHS/HS respondents in the STARS to Quality program.	36.84%	7
Facilitate communication between Head Start and The STARS to Quality program.	68.42%	13
Assist in identifying ways to limit impact of EHS/HS staff turnover on STARS to Quality levels.	31.58%	6
Reduce duplicate training requirements for HS/EHS staff in the STARS to Quality Program.	78.95%	15
Promote benefits of how QRIS supports and aligns with Head Start Performance Standards.	21.05%	5
Increase in training available on assessment, outcomes and connection between QRIS requirements and Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP).	26.32%	5

Factors that are most important for HS programs to fully Use the STARS to Quality program: Respondents were asked to identify areas that were most important to fully use the STARS program in the next year. The major areas identified were accessing trainings at time and place convenient for staff and resources needed for STARS participation (time, program investments etc.). The next highest was maintaining STAR levels with departure of staff. Accessing training has become a larger factor for EHS/HS programs.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Accessing amount of trainings at time and places convenient for staff.	66.67%	12
Communication about STARS to Quality program.	11.11%	2
Resources needed for STARS participation (time, program investments, changes within own program, etc.).	66.67%	12
Applying STARS practices and precepts to EHS/HS program.	27.78%	5
Maintaining STAR levels with departure of staff.	38.89%	7
STARS training, coaching, and support.	16.67%	3
Other	11.11%	2

There were three open ended questions included in the survey about STARS to Quality in the coming grant year. Below are those responses:

What has been the biggest benefit to your program or staff due to participating in STARS to Quality?
(17 responses)

- The funding has provided opportunity for increased wages and/or supplies (4)
- Staff development through training and increased professionalism (4)
- There has been no benefit for us being a STARS member. (2)
- Having better teacher outcomes for kids (1)
- The opportunity for advancement (1)
- NA (5)

What has been the biggest challenge to advancing levels in STARS to Quality? (17 responses, some programs include several of the areas below in their answers)

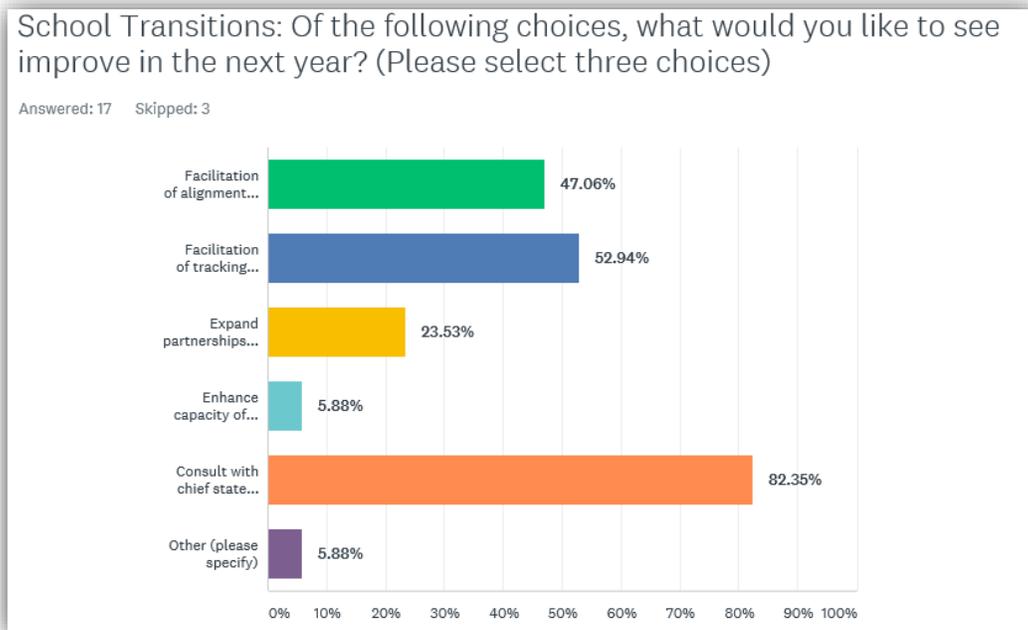
- Duplicated training (5)
- Staff Turnover (5)
- Training with limited availability, limited people and lack of group training (whole staff) (5)
- Funding (2)
- Understanding STARS to Quality and how to get started (1)
- Time to maintain portfolios (1)
- Workforce development and input from various stakeholders (1)
- Prep time for reviews (1)
- NA (3)

How can STARS to Quality better support your program participating? (12 responses, some programs include several of the areas below in their answers)

- Provide more group training to staff, open more slots to participate in courses, provide training on site (4)
- Accept training from OHS as high quality and allow it to be used as STARS training (3)
- More communication (2)
- Unity between licensing and quality (1)
- Educate STARS staff on HS practices (1)
- HS programs in good standing come into STARS at a 3 or 5 (1)
- Continue Partnerships (1)
- NA (1)

School Transitions

For school transitions the highest priority for grantees is to have HSCO consult with chief state school officers to foster an understanding of EHS/HS in Montana. Given the elections in the last year and change of leadership this is an important area for consideration and has already been happening with meeting with the Superintendent of Public Education and with her deputies about EHS/HS in Montana and ESSA as well as ongoing collaboration.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Facilitation of alignment between Head Start curricula and assessments with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, with Montana early-learning standards and Kindergarten curricula.	47.06%	8
Facilitation of tracking EHS/HS student outcomes as they enter and progress through public school.	52.94%	9
Expand partnerships with local education agencies, including pre-kindergarten and transition-to-kindergarten programs.	23.53%	4
Enhance capacity of Head Start agencies to provide services to dual language learners and their families, and to promote and support appropriate curricula for children with limited English.	5.88%	1
Consult with chief state school officers to foster understanding of Head Start comprehensive services, to align curricula and assessments, and to promote partnerships between Head Start and local educational agencies.	82.35%	14
Other		1

State and Regional Priority Impacts

Survey respondents were asked to identify the impact of state and regional priority areas on their programs. This question focused on vulnerable populations and specific service areas.

In Tier 1 of high impact were health services, services to children with disabilities, child and family services, welfare, services to children experiencing homelessness and community and family services. Family literacy appeared to be a second tier: quite high impact for many programs, but had a greater proportion of moderate to limited impact. In Tier III, provision of services to military families is of limited impact in many communities, but it is important to note that a few communities do have a significant military presence.

Regional HSCO Priorities: Please indicate the level of impact addressing each of these priorities has on your EHS/HS program and the families and children you serve.				
Answer Options	High impact	Moderate impact	Limited impact	Response Count
Child Welfare (Protective & Preventive Services)	12	6	1	19
Community and Family Services	11	7	1	19
Family Literacy	7	9	3	19
Health Services	13	5	1	19
Military Families	3	4	12	19
Services to Children with Disabilities	15	3	1	19
Services to Children Experiencing Homeless	8	6	5	19
Welfare	11	5	3	19
<i>answered question</i>				19

HSCO-Program Partnerships Role for State and Regional Priorities

Survey respondents were asked what kind of role they would like the HSCO to play in collaboration with the individual programs, ranging from "as-needed" communication to ongoing, extensive collaboration on projects. Like the individual program assessments of program impacts, respondents are quite clear in the level of participation for each priority. Most want regular communication and a few are interested in work on specific projects. Regular communication was the most frequently identified partnership role.

Regional HSCO Priorities: Please pick the role that best characterizes the level of partnership you would like between your program and the State Collaboration Office on the following seven regional HSCO priorities in the next five years.

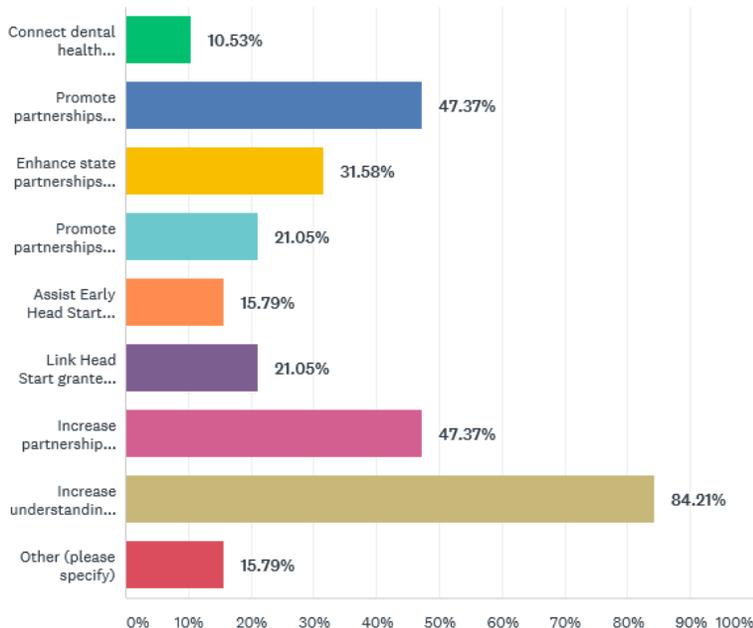
Answer Options	Information shared from HSCO office on an "as-needed" basis.	Regular communication between my program and HSCO office	Work on specific projects or objectives within this priority	Ongoing collaboration and work	Response Count
Child Welfare	5	9	2	2	18
Community Services	7	9	2	0	18
Family Literacy	6	9	4	0	19
Health Services	5	9	4	1	19
Military Families	13	5	1	0	19
Services to Children with Disabilities	4	10	2	3	19
Services to Children Experiencing Homelessness	6	10	2	1	19
Welfare	6	11	1	1	19
answered question					19

Mental and Physical Health Services

Both mental and physical health is essential for proper development. Respondents were asked to identify the three issues within this domain that were highest priority for the next year. Increased partnerships with state mental health initiatives for low income children was identified as a top priority by far at 75%, followed by increasing understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and ongoing, periodic screening services. This area is one where significant HSCO time spent on collaboration and system-level improvement will be useful.

Health Services: Of the following physical, mental, and oral health factors, what do you think is most important to improve in the next year? (Please choose up to three choices.)

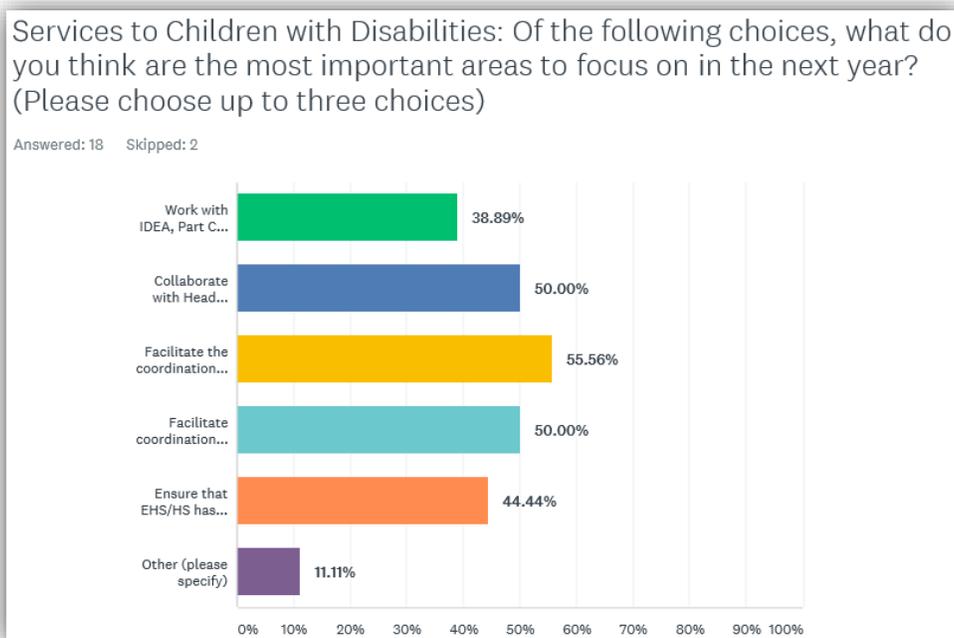
Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Connect dental health providers to programs so all Head Start children have a dental home.	10.53%	2
Promote partnerships to ensure all eligible children receive the full range of Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT), services through Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), community clinics, and private providers, and that all necessary follow-up is completed for physical, mental, and oral health.	47.37%	9
Enhance state partnerships to ensure all children are enrolled in health insurance, including Healthy Montana Kids (HMK).	31.58%	6
Promote partnerships to support the unique needs of Early Head Start grantees through linkages with community services such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), La Leche League, Public Health Nursing, and others.	21.05%	4
Assist Early Head Start agencies that serve pregnant women to identify community resources that provide prenatal and post-partum education and care, including mental health services.	15.79%	3
Link Head Start grantees with state and regional representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to promote joint initiatives to protect children from environmental hazards such as secondhand, third hand smoke, asthma triggers, pests, and pesticides.	21.05%	4
Increase partnership with state mental health initiatives to ensure that low income children receive comprehensive mental health services.	47.37%	9
Increase understanding of early childhood trauma, toxic stress, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how Head Start programs can better educate staff and parents on this topic.	84.21%	16
Other (please specify)	15.79%	3

Services to Children with Disabilities

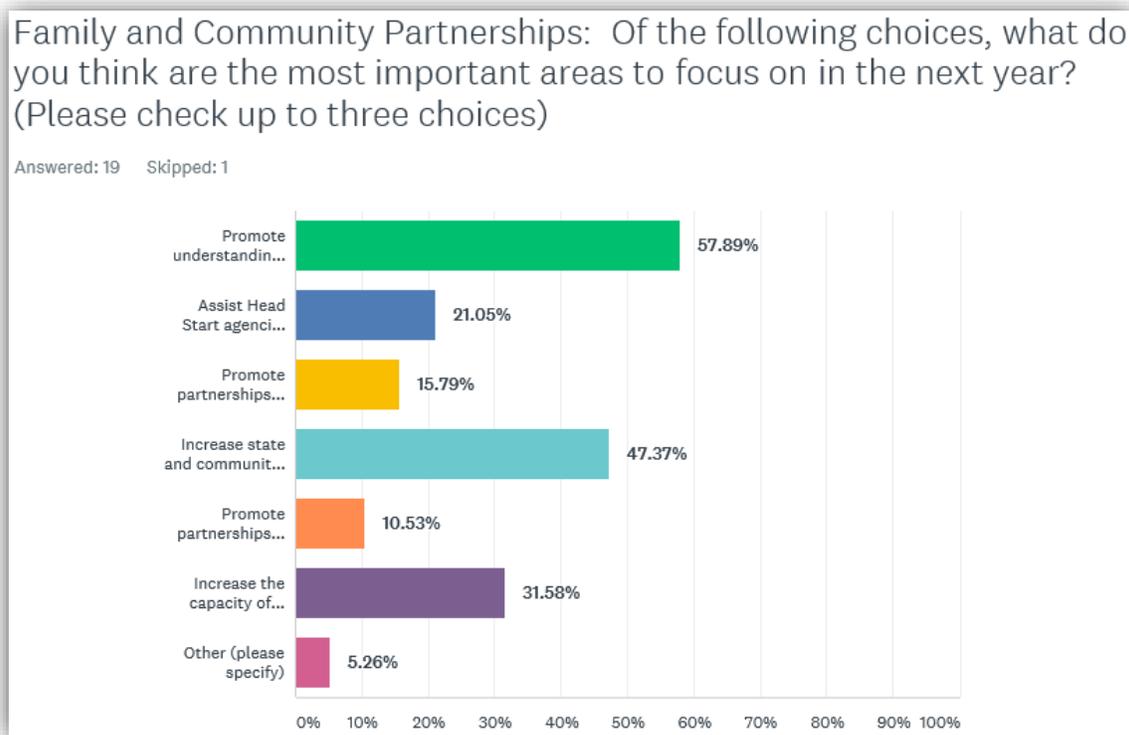
Services for children with disabilities was the highest impact responses in overall priorities. Facilitating the coordination and participation of local Head Start personnel in the state's child identification efforts (Child Find) and other early identification activities was most frequently identified as an area for focus. Second was to Facilitate the coordination and participation of local Head Start personnel in the state's child identification efforts (Child Find) and other early identification activities and tied with it was Collaborate with Head Start, Early Head Start, Part C, Part B, and other partners on statewide interagency activities, agreements, training and MOUs addressing the needs of families with children who have special needs. All areas were very close in terms of the need for focus in the coming year.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Work with IDEA, Part C and Part B, to promote policies and practices that support the effective inclusion of Head Start and Early Head Start children with disabilities.	38.89%	7
Collaborate with Head Start, Early Head Start, Part C, Part B, and other partners on statewide interagency activities, agreements, training and MOUs addressing the needs of families with children who have special needs.	50%	9
Facilitate the coordination and participation of local Head Start personnel in the state's child identification efforts (Child Find) and other early identification activities.	55.56%	10
Facilitate coordination between Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, local Education Agencies (LEAs), and Part C/Early Identification for approaches that promote the timely referral, evaluation, and transition of children from Head Start into elementary school in accordance with federal, state and local requirements.	50%	9
Ensure that EHS/HS has representation on the Montana Family Support Services Advisory Council.	44.44%	8
Other (please specify)	11.11%	2

Family and Community Partnerships

Respondents identified promotion of the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework as a top priority, followed by increasing state and community awareness of the EHS/HS model and third was increasing the capacity to partner with libraries, museums and other community partners.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Promote understanding of the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework among Head Start grantees and other early child care partners.	57.89%	11
Assist Head Start agencies in developing public and private partnerships to increase and coordinate resources for Head Start and other early childhood programs.	21.05%	4
Promote partnerships between Head Start agencies and local early childhood coalitions.	15.79%	3

Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Increase state and community partner's awareness of the EHS/HS model and the benefits these programs provide.	47.37%	9
Promote partnerships between Head Start agencies, community partners, and other organizations to improve support for military families.	10.53%	2
Increase the capacity of Head Start grantees to collaborate with local museums, public and school libraries, and other resources to provide learning experiences for Head Start children.	31.58%	6
Other (please specify)	5.26%	1

Military Families

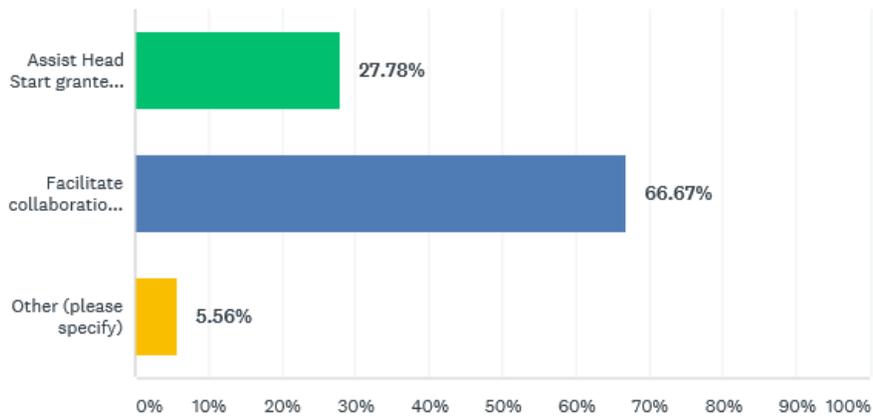
One option for prioritization of family and community services was to partner with organizations to improve support for military families. Only three respondents put this option in their high impact category in this question. This seems to reflect the overall impact of this priority: a handful of communities see high need, but many do not have many military families or are unaware of issues associated with military service.

Welfare

Welfare that sustains families in poverty was identified as the fourth highest impact state and regional priority area. The clear system need is to facilitate collaboration between Head Start and the welfare system with a goal of helping parents and families move out of poverty.

Welfare: Of the following choices, what are the most important areas to focus on in the next year?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 2



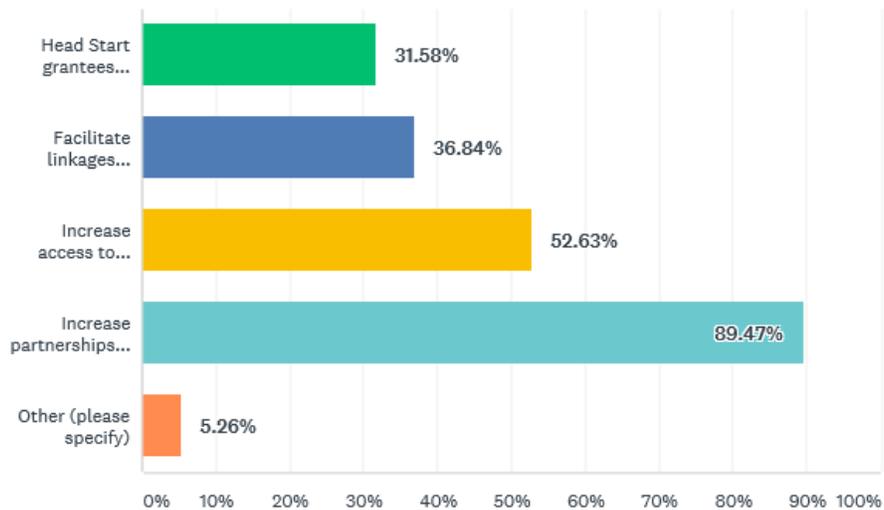
Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Assist Head Start grantees in developing partnerships with welfare agencies and employers to provide appropriate training and employment opportunities for Head Start parents.	27.78%	5
Facilitate collaboration between Head Start agencies and the welfare system to provide flexibility for Head Start parents as they move along the continuum of education, training, and part-time employment to full-time employment.	66.67%	12
Other (please specify)	5.56%	1

Child Welfare

This was an area where the majority of respondents (18 of 19) rated this high or moderate impact on their programs. Regardless of specific community circumstances, it is clear this is an important area for further partnerships and coordination. Partnerships between EHS/HS agencies and law enforcement, community based organizations and substance abuse and mental health agencies to reduce impact on child development of substance abuse, child abuse and domestic violence was by far the highest rated choice at 89.47%. Resources and information to promote child welfare were also identified as an area to further address.

Child Welfare (Protective and Preventive Services): Of the following choices, what do you think are the most important areas to focus on in the next year? (Please choose up to three choices)

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



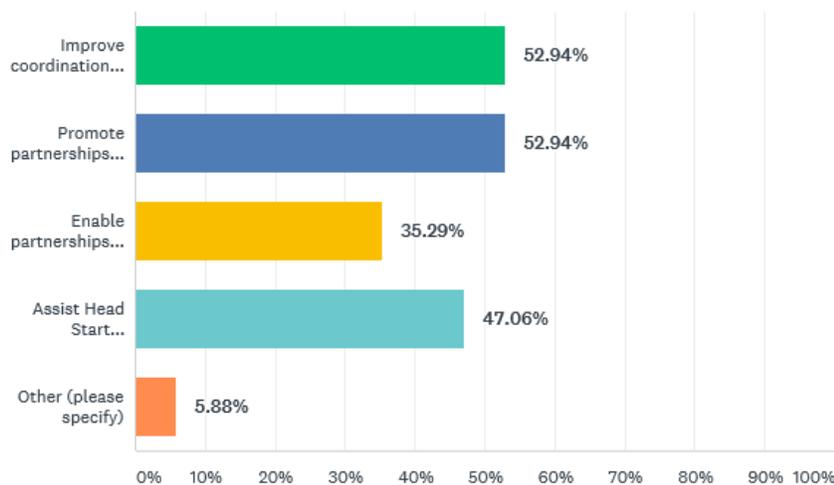
Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Head Start grantees receive assistance to improve local coordination with child welfare.	31.58%	6
Facilitate linkages between home-visiting programs, such as Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, Strengthening Families and home-based Early Head Start and Head Start programs.	36.84%	7
Increase access to information and resources that will help Early Head Start and Head Start programs further promote child welfare.	52.63%	10
Increase partnerships between Head Start agencies and law enforcement, relevant community-based organizations, and substance abuse and mental health agencies to reduce the impact on child development of substance abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence.	89.47%	17
Other (please specify)	5.26%	1

Services to Children Experiencing Homelessness

Community need in this area appeared to differ, perhaps based on underlying homeless rates. However, most programs did see this area as high impact. HSCO could be most useful in the next year in focusing on promoting partnerships that support Head Start programs in addressing barriers to servicing children and families that are experiencing homelessness. Coordinating between EHS/HS programs and state and local McKinney-Vento coordinators and using the T/TA network to coordinate the needs of Head Start agencies and the community to strengthen practices for serving children and families experiencing homelessness were the other major areas for further work. All these areas were very close in the percentages thus indicating a strong need for further support in working with families and children that experience homelessness. This is also a priority in the CCDF regulations thus an area for further systems work.

Services to children who are experiencing homelessness: Of the following choices, what do you think are the most important areas to focus on in the next year? (Please choose up to three choices)

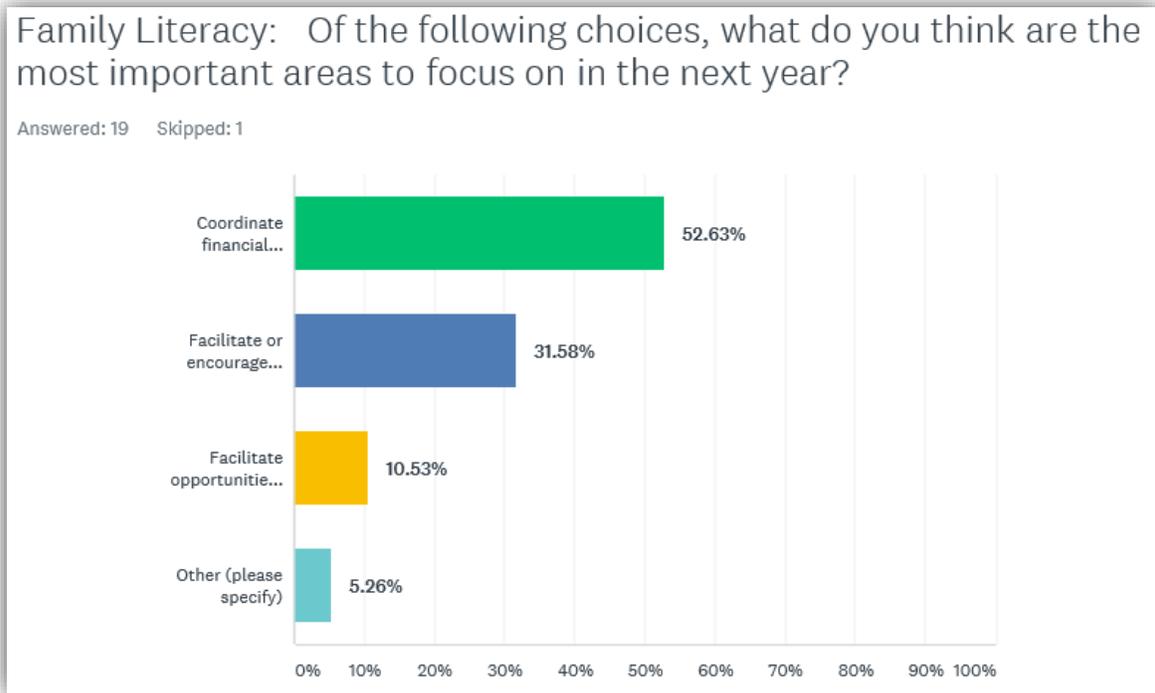
Answered: 17 Skipped: 3



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Improve coordination between Head Start agencies and state and local McKinney-Vento coordinators or directors.	52.94%	9
Promote partnerships that support Head Start agencies in addressing barriers to serving children and families experiencing homelessness.	52.94%	9
Enable partnerships between Head Start agencies, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) continuum of Care networks, and state homeless education directors.	35.29%	6
Assist Head Start state-based T/TA providers to coordinate the needs of Head Start agencies and the community to strengthen practices for serving children and families experiencing homelessness.	47.06%	8
Other (please specify)	5.88%	1

Family Literacy

The majority of survey respondents identified this area as having moderate impact on their programs. It is important, but appears to be a Tier III issue in terms of overall importance. For HSCO, it appears that the most important activity would be to further coordinate to promote family literacy.



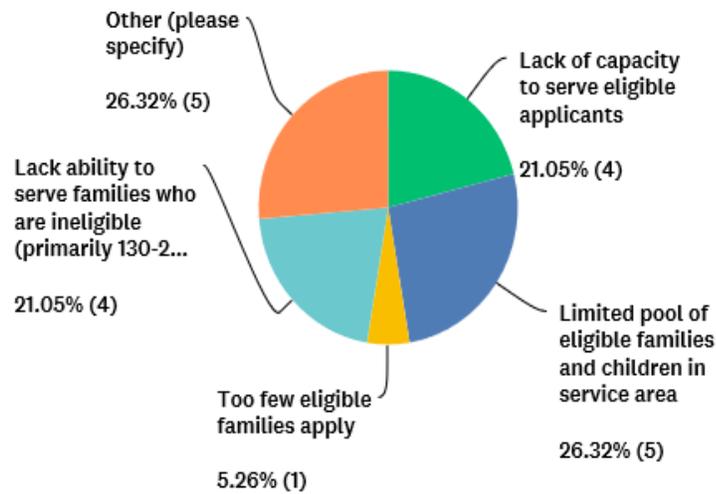
Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Coordinate financial literacy opportunities using existing community or state resources and programs, including the adult education system and/or local financial institutions.	52.63%	10
Facilitate or encourage collaboration with local libraries, school libraries, museums, summer enrichment programs, local literacy councils and professional groups for donations of books, activities and services.	31.58%	6
Facilitate opportunities to learn about literacy programs at the state level, such as efforts around dialogic reading and initiatives at the Office of Public Instruction (Striving Readers, etc.), Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and the State Library.	10.53%	2
Other (please specify)	5.26%	1

Early Head Start and Head Start Program Enrollment

In discussions with directors, underlying demographic and economic factors were frequently cited for why a specific site or region experienced issues. No one solution will address enrollment in Montana from the answers it seems to be a very multi-faceted issue with response being almost the same for 4 out of the 5 categories including other.

EHS/HS Enrollment: Please choose the most important factor that affects enrollment in your EHS/HS programs. (Choose the most important option. Please use comments to identify other priorities or factors that affect enrollment.)

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Lack of capacity to serve eligible applicants	21.05%	4
Limited pool of eligible families and children in service area	26.32%	5
Too few eligible families apply	5.26%	1
Lack ability to serve families who are ineligible (primarily 130-200% of FPL), but could really use EHS/HS services	21.05%	4
Other (please specify)	26.32%	5

At the end of the survey there was an open-ended question about HSCO support in the coming grant year. Below are those responses:

Please identify one or more things that the HSCO could address in the next year to support the work your program does in your community? (8 responses)

- Coordination of HS and STARS (2)
- Keep programs updated on changes and opportunities at the state (2)
- Help educate school districts about the value of HS (1)
- Ensure that HS is seen as high quality at the state level through communication that supports this idea. (1)
- Programmatic level support (1)
- Family engagement (1)

Conclusion:

Within each section the HSCO has highlighted the areas which are the highest ranked and or need. They provide a picture of programmatic needs for the state. Through the different tables and graphs we can see a picture of the needs of EHS/HS programs in Montana.

Certainly, ongoing professional Development about early childhood mental health issues including ACEs, behavioral management and parent engagement were strong needs. They were mentioned in multiple responses throughout the survey. Systems alignment work and decreased duplication of training seems to also be a strong theme throughout when looking at the Early Childhood system including STARS to Quality and Licensing. Coordinating with the larger k-12 system also came out as a strong theme being mentioned in data and areas for HSCO to address in the next year as well as the transition section. Another area that came out as a very strong need was increased partnerships between HS and law enforcement, community based substance abuse and mental health. This is possibly due to drug use and abuse which is a significant health issue seen across our state.

The HSCO uses the needs assessment update to revise the HSCO grant goals and workplan in conjunction with the MTHSA and stakeholders.