



MONTANA HEAD START COLLABORATION OFFICE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY 2021

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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 2018 Head Start Collaboration Needs Assessment is to evaluate perceptions held by Head Start and Early Head Start programs 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.

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.

The 2021 Needs Assessment is comprehensive of 2 data sources:

1. Survey Analysis & Findings: The survey was conducted via Survey Monkey in 2021 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 for the 2020–2021-time frame.

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 data will inform the work of the Head Start Collaboration Office in the upcoming year and provide state and local partners with information about Head Start and Early Head Start perceptions and needs across the state. Additionally, data was shared with the MTHSA and the EHS-CCP grantee Directors in October to gather further information and review for validity and interpretation.

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 survey used to collect data this year is a modification of earlier surveys thus the data is comparable in most cases. It will be used to assess improvement in collaboration, as well as needed shifts in where and how collective and collaborative efforts are executed.

RESPONDENTS

In June-early September 2021 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 responses were received, all self-identified in the survey. They consisted of 75% Directors, 10% Managers, 10% Teachers and 5% Other staff. All answers were de-identified in this summary.

Findings

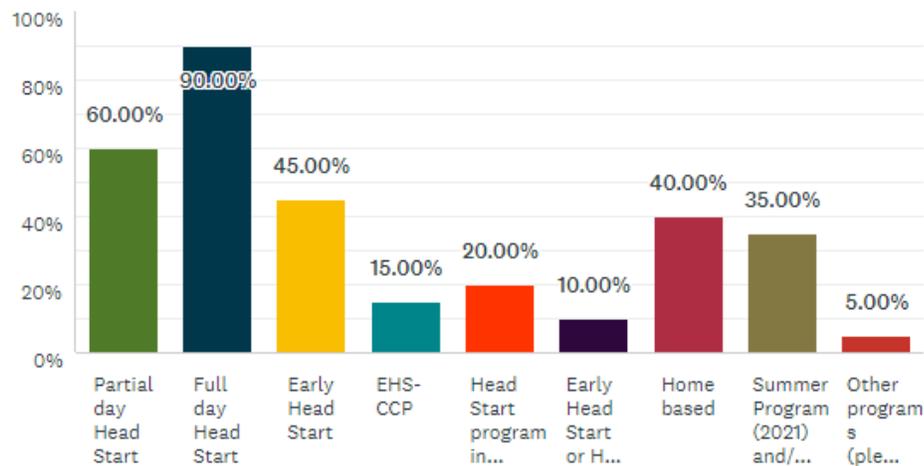
A note on the analysis: Findings are based on responses to a non-scientific survey. The results, though informative, are not to be considered representative of all Head Start and Early Head Start employees in Montana. The purpose is to inform the Head Start Collaboration Office and other partners, for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

PROGRAMS OFFERED

Respondents were asked to characterize the programs they currently have or expect to have in place by 2022. Many offer more than one program model. 20 respondents answered this question. Of note is 35% planned to offer Summer programs due to COVID-19 pandemic in order to transition more effectively to Kindergarten and to support children with IEPs.

Please check all program models you currently offer or you plan to offer in your agency by 2022.

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0

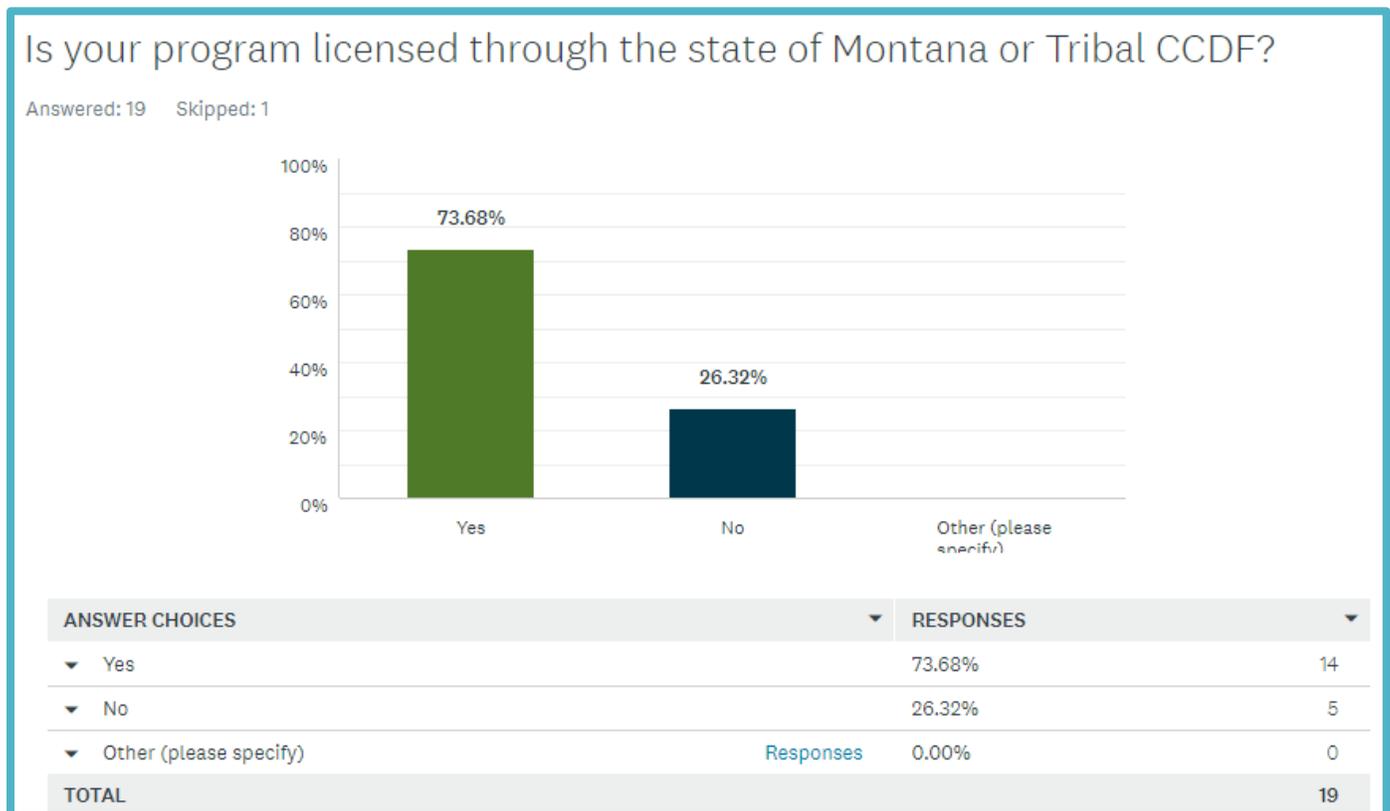


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Partial day Head Start	60.00% 12
Full day Head Start	90.00% 18
Early Head Start	45.00% 9
EHS-CCP	15.00% 3
Head Start program in tandem with special needs preschool	20.00% 4
Early Head Start or Head Start program in tandem with child care (not EHS-CCP)	10.00% 2
Home based	40.00% 8
Summer Program(2021) and/or extended school year	35.00% 7
Other programs (please specify)	Responses 5.00% 1
Total Respondents: 20	

LICENSED PROGRAMS AND STARS TO QUALITY EHS/HS PROGRAM PARTICIPATION:

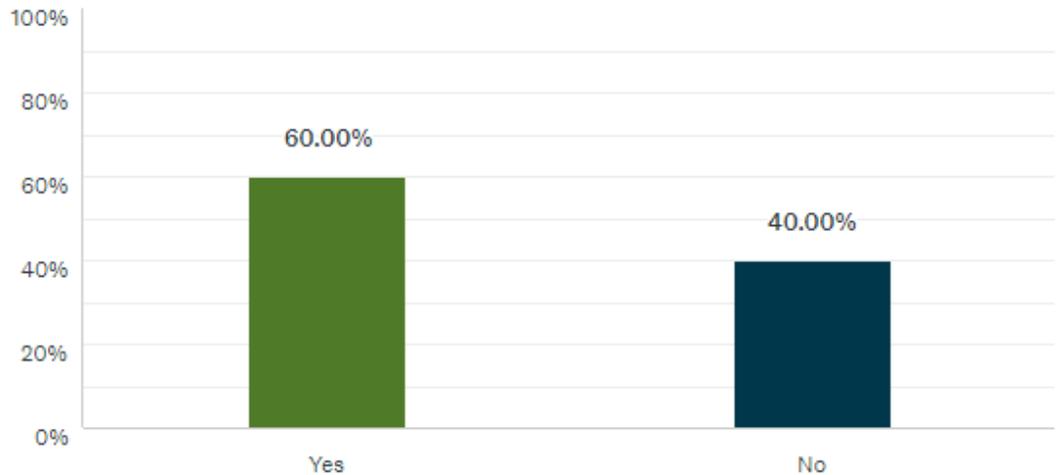
Programs in Montana at the HS or preschool age group can choose to be licensed, Early Head Start programs are required by regulation to be licensed. For a program to participate in childcare subsidy, the QRIS-STARS to Quality, or upcoming ARPA stabilization grants, a program must be licensed. EHS/HS program involvement across the state in these two connected state systems are important data points. 73.68% of respondents are licensed by the state. We have seen an increase from last year of respondents involved in Child Care licensing.

STARS to Quality had a lower percentage of respondents at 60% involved in QRIS, but higher than last year which was 47%. Head Start programs see becoming licensed as part of the process of being involved in STARS to Quality. Currently there is an upward trend of more EHS/HS programs being involved in licensing and STARS to Quality which is beneficial for the state system and Head Start programs.



Is your program in STARS to Quality (Montana's QRIS)?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



POTENTIAL HSCO ROLES:

Respondents were asked to identify something that would be helpful for HSCO to address in the next year. To de-identify specific answers, the answers are listed in general categories with frequency of response. These changed this year with a higher emphasis on health and enrollment.

The responses were:

- Mental wellness for students, parents, and staff 1
- Continuing ongoing updates about state EC 1
- Recruitment support to programs 3
- Continue sharing what HS does in communities we serve 1
- The need for better/healthier/safer head Start facilities within our tribal areas 1
- Training 1

Items listed are appropriate areas for the HSCO to have a system level role in supporting and will inform the current HSCO strategic workplan.

COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

Respondents were asked to identify the level of collaboration between the local EHS/HS program and community partners. The most frequent response is highlighted for each answer option. In two 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. 20 respondents answered this question.

Answer Options	High-level collaboration	Moderate collaboration	Limited collaboration	No collaboration	Not applicable
Local Education Agencies - Transitions	12	7	1	0	0
Local Education Agencies - Part B	8	6	6	0	2
Early Intervention - Part C	5	9	4	0	2
Child Care R&R Agencies	6	8	0	2	3
STARS to Quality (QRIS) coaches and consultants	9	3	0	3	5
Childcare licensing	8	3	2	1	6
Libraries and/or museums	1	11	5	3	0
Child Care Centers (for continuation of full-day, year-round services)	2	3	6	6	3
Early Childhood Mental Health Services	5	3	9	2	1
Adult Mental Health Counseling Services	3	5	8	4	0
Homelessness Services	4	7	7	2	0
SNAP, TANF	6	10	3	1	0
Healthy Montana Kids (CHIP, HMK, HMK+)	4	11	5	0	0
WIC	7	11	2	0	0
CACFP (Child and adult care food program)	14	4	1	1	0
Food Pantries	6	7	4	2	1
Local Health Department	9	8	2	0	0
Home Visiting (i.e., MIECHV/ Healthy Montana Families)	2	3	5	5	5
Pediatric Practices/Clinics	3	8	5	2	2
Dental Home Providers	5	8	3	1	3
Child Protective Services	10	7	3	0	0

Most areas have the majority of responses in the high and moderate collaboration columns. Areas where responses are clustered in the limited or no collaboration happening include Mental Health for children and

adults, Home Visiting and Child Care. Mental Health services, availability of clinicians in rural and tribal areas and having expertise in early childhood are issues that come up frequently with programs, so these results have been consistent with anecdotal information.

The ranking of collaboration areas provides guidance for areas of additional strategic work for the collaboration office.

PROGRAM IMPACTS OF FEDERAL PRIORITIES

HSCO-PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS ROLE FOR FEDERAL PRIORITIES

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.

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 childcare systems, emphasizing EHS-CC Partnerships	4	10	2	3	19
Work with state efforts to collect data regarding early childhood education (ECE) programs and child outcomes.	1	9	2	7	19
Support the expansion and access to high quality workforce and career development opportunities for staff, including staff recruitment and retention	0	10	4	5	19
Collaborate with QRIS (STARS to Quality program)	1	10	2	6	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
Work with the state school system to ensure continuity	2	10	1	5	18
Comments					0

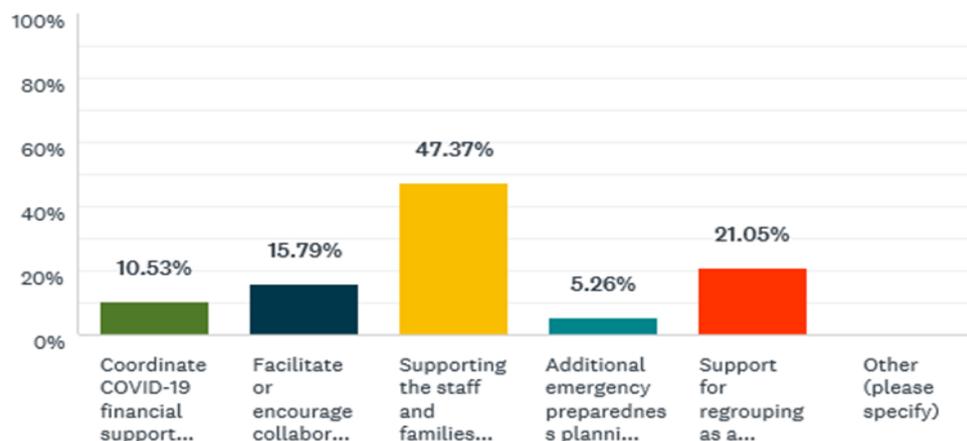
Factors that may be driving these choices may include differences in resources, experience, or program level assessment of the most effective use of their resources. However, without further follow-up, it isn't possible to say which factors are most important for any particular program. The results do tend to suggest that two types of partnerships between HSCO and the individual programs are requested by programs: 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. There is a larger number interested in more ongoing collaborative work in all priority areas as compared to last year's survey.

COVID-19 AND EHS/HS:

Due to the unprecedented time, we are in, dealing with a pandemic and a landscape that is constantly changing, several questions were added to assess program needs and hear about programmatic responses and successes. Though a few questions in a quickly changing situation only provide a glimpse in time of needs, it does provide some limited information about EHS/HS programmatic responses to the crisis and need areas.

COVID-19: Of the following choices, what do you think are the most important areas to focus on in the next year?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Coordinate COVID-19 financial opportunities using existing and new community, state and federal resources and programs.	11%	2
Facilitate or encourage collaboration with local resources to have coordinated approach to ongoing needs.	16%	3
Support of programs staff and families with mental health, self-care and trauma related resources.	47%	9
Additional emergency preparedness planning for staff to include technology and self-care and other program specific needs.	5%	1
Support for regrouping as a program to navigate the new normal after COVID-19.	21%	4
Other	0%	0

The highest was mental health, self-care and trauma related resources and support. The next being support for regrouping as a program to navigate the new normal after COVID-19. These two categories switched in this year's survey responses and currently mental health and trauma related resources was by far the highest. It indicates the changes from a year ago and the current needs programs are seeing as the pandemic continues.

Question: What are your biggest needs given the COVID-19 Pandemic and its effects on your program?
Program Answers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting and hiring qualified teachers ▪ Recruitment of both staff and children ▪ Maintaining staff attendance ▪ Enrollment and recruitment and shut-down due to COVID-19 ▪ Enrollment- lack of right now. ▪ Reaching full enrollment, limited workforce ▪ Lack of applications in some communities since the onset of the pandemic ▪ Motivating staff over long term healing and encouraging parents to return ▪ Enrollment is down ▪ Living on a reservation and having to follow multiple guidelines from various agencies. It gets confusing and difficult to navigate at times. ▪ The mental health piece for staff and families

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We were very lucky last year. We fully opened, and nearly reached full enrollment. We only had to close a couple of classrooms due to exposure for a couple of days. We did reach critical staffing crisis a few times because of quarantines. Staffing HS programs is always hard, but even harder this last year--hoping for improvements this year, but I'm not holding my breath! |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ meet the needs of families and children in mental health low enrollment |

As we know the COVID-19 pandemic is an ever-changing situation, needs change quickly as the community spread looks different across Montana. The most pressing needs for programs currently are about staff and child recruitment. Many programs have problem solved about health and safety, technology, food delivery, family support virtually and other issues. Most programs have tackled many of the issues listed here for the short term but as the pandemic continues ongoing support for enrollment and workforce resources at the state and local level are critical.

EHS/HS Programs plans for COVID-19 funding:

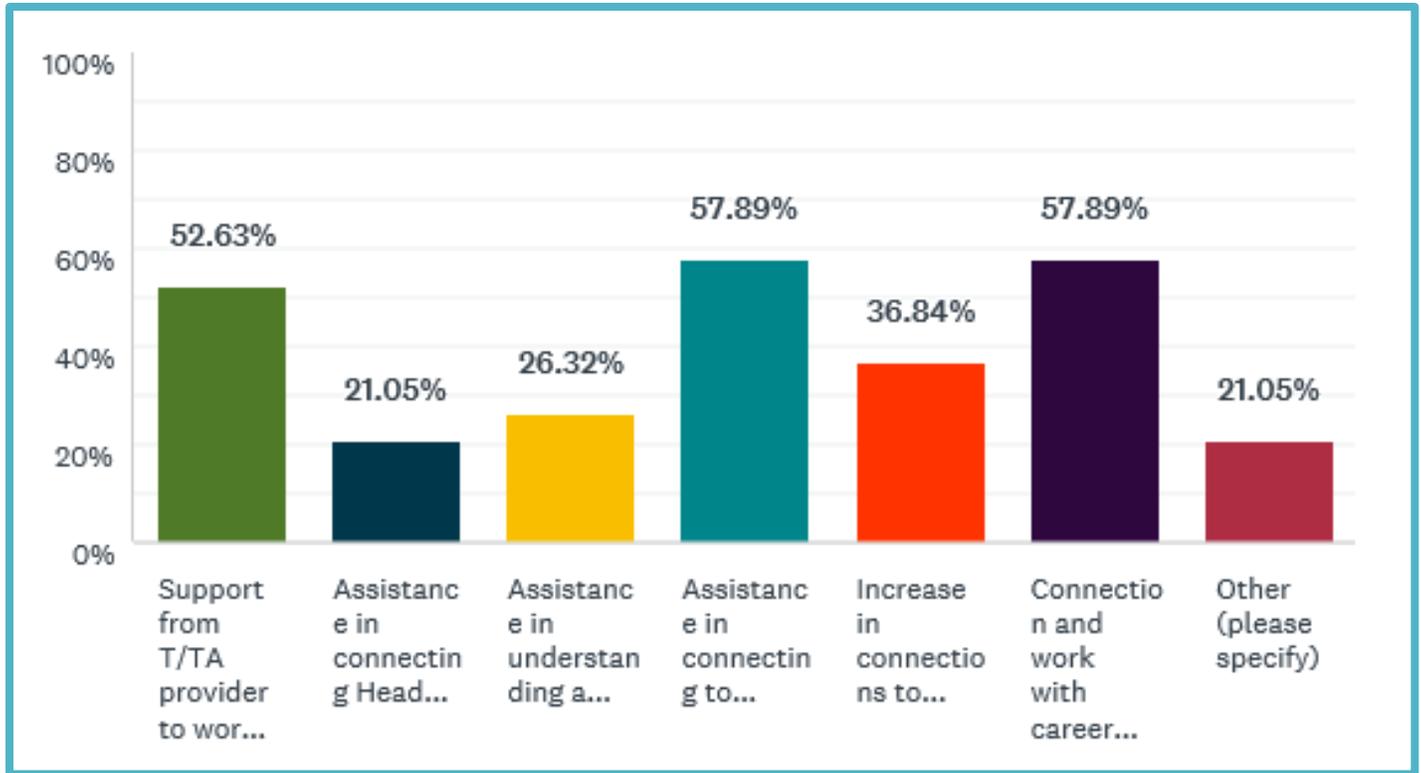
A question was asked about EHS/HS programmatic plans for COVID-19 funds received. Below are the responses- 16 respondents answered this question.

- Ordering additional tables and plexiglass dividers for the classrooms, ordering scrubs for the staff to prevent cross contamination, health staff to check students and parents in when dropping their child off and picking them up, and an extra janitor to clean the playground between use as well as the buses and buildings.
- Support maintaining our staffing numbers, increased wages to match local employment market
- Extended class time for Head Start programs
- New HVAC System in 25 year old facilities (2).
- Increased wages
- Employ mental health professional on-site
- Positions - IT, custodian center enhancements - additional playground equipment and space
- Our funding will go towards technology for families/children
- Improve our facilities, expand our COACHING needs, recruit more employees, improve playground structures
- Summer reading/literacy activities in neighborhoods where our kids live (this summer), next summer we want to do a mini summer program. extra staff if we can find them, updates to technology, classroom supplies, etc.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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 and connecting with career counselors and with Higher Ed for staff preparation and further support from the T/TA providers to meet degree requirements, the top three remained the same as last year but shifted their

order. The top three were basically equal in need per response counts of 1 that differentiated between them.



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).	53%	10
Assistance in connecting Head Start agencies with higher education agencies that provide distance learning programs.	21%	4
Assistance in understanding and navigating the state-wide professional development system.	26%	5
Assistance in connecting to training opportunities to train new employees and employees taking on new roles within Head Start agencies.	58%	11
Increase in connections to training and coaching within the STARS to Quality program.	37%	7
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.	58%	11
Other (please specify)	21%	4

SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

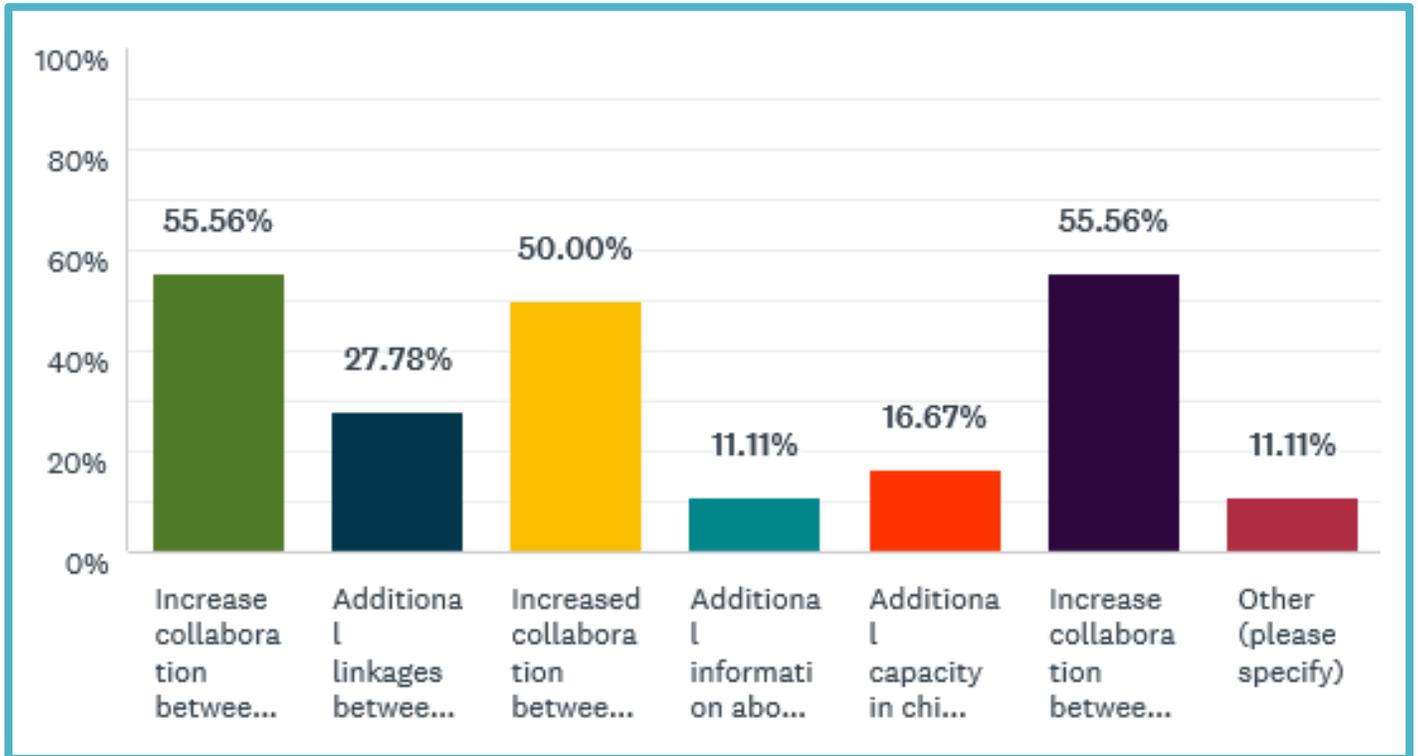
Respondents were invited to identify specific types of trainings and areas of greatest need. Twelve responded with specific ideas in multiple areas. The answers are listed below

- CLASS, TSG, S/E supports, children on the spectrum
- Having a firm understanding of CLASS
- Some light-hearted and fun content facilitated virtually would be great to help reduce some stress!
- Conflict resolution, Verbal de-escalation
- Community Assessment (consultant list to do our assessment), Class Overview, ERSEA, Parent Engagement
- Report writing, in using SWOT, data, time management, planning, establishing long-term goals and self-assessments. Mental Health is also very important!
- Father engagement, infant toddler, IMIL
- Working with children with disabilities and challenging behaviors. How the environment contributes to health issues in MT
- Training on the outcomes and giving us tangible things to do in our classroom instead of just theories.
- Training within the mental health and behaviors are always helpful and I would like to see more training with autism
- CLASS Basics/Understanding for education, Planned Language Approach
- Family Engagement

Though the HSCO does not provide direct T/TA, consistently communicating HS needs ensures partners who provide training have accurate information about what programs are looking for in professional development. It also provides specific information for discussions at the state about professional development needs. This year's survey indicates that further CLASS training is needed especially for new staff. Directors may be looking for some basic level training for staff which would also indicate that is an area for more information gathering about staff needs. We know that staff hiring and retention have been challenging.

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 HS and OPI and HS and the state child care licensing to improve quality and reduce barriers for early childhood programs were the top focus areas and increased collaboration between Governor's Office and CCR & R (56%, 10) with the third highest being increased collaboration between HS agencies and local child care programs. This is an area of important ongoing work, alignment and inclusion continues to be an EHS/HS need based on the program responses.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Increased collaboration between state education agencies and state childcare licensing to improve the standards of quality and reduce regulatory barriers facing early childhood programs.	56%	10
Additional linkages between Head Start. Local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and the Early Childhood and Family Support Division.	28%	5
Increased collaboration between Head Start agencies and local childcare programs to ensure that quality, full-working day and full-calendar year services are available to children and families who need them.	50%	9
Additional information about childcare quality improvement and licensing initiatives.	11%	2
Additional capacity in childcare programs for quality infant-toddler care through linkages with Head Start professional development.	17%	3
Increase collaboration between Governor's Office, Child Care Resource and Referral system, and HS/EHS to promote quality early education programs.	56%	10
Other (please specify)	11%	2

Other responses included:

- Enrollment. We need data on children, however HIPPA becomes an issue. Need to share data to help one another.
- The impact of ratio changes to CCP explore alternative CDA models not dependent on R&R limited training schedules

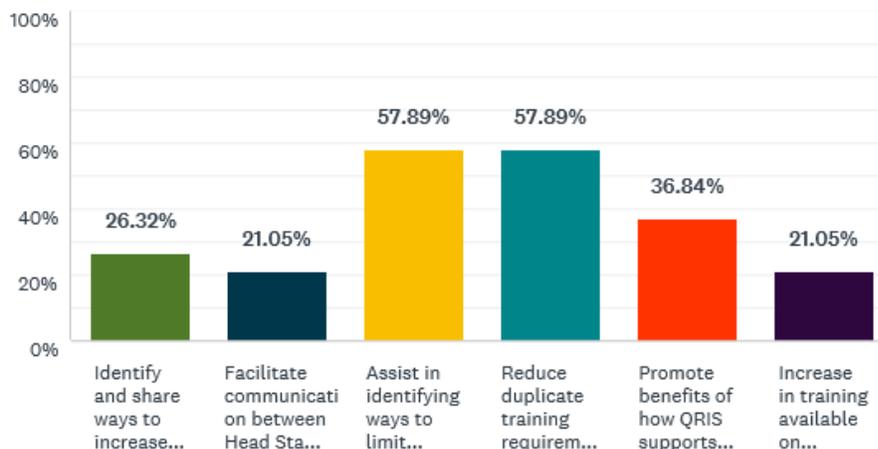
COLLABORATION WITH STARS TO QUALITY (QRIS)

The STARS to Quality program is the quality rating and improvement system 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 identifying ways to limit the impact of staff turnover on STARS levels, third was facilitate communication between Head Start and the STARS to Quality program.

At this time, no AIAN HS programs participate in the Montana STARS to Quality program but have an interest, that would be an additional need area identified.

Collaborate with QRIS: In Montana, Best Beginnings STARS to Quality is the QRIS (Quality Rating Improvement System). What are the most important areas to focus on in the next year? (Please choose up to three choices)

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1

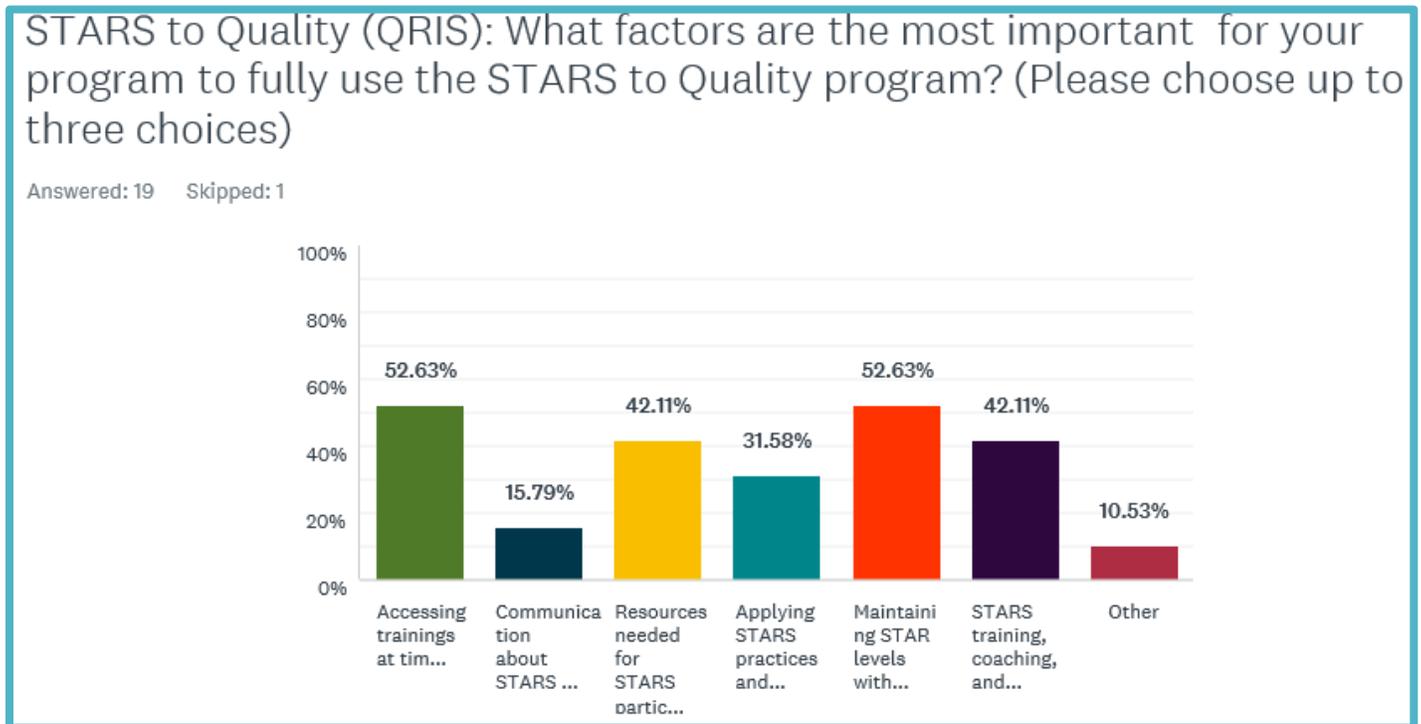


Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Identify and share ways to increase the level of EHS/HS participants in the STARS to Quality program.	26%	5
Facilitate communication between Head Start and the STARS to Quality program.	21%	4

Assist in identifying ways to limit the impact of EHS/HS staff turnover on Starts to Quality levels.	58%	11
Reduce duplicate training requirements for EHS/HS staff in the STARS to Quality program.	58%	11
Promote the benefits of how QRIS (STARS) supports and aligns with the Head Start Program Performance Standards.	37%	7
Increase in training available on assessment, outcomes, and connection between QRIS requirements and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP).	21%	4

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 maintaining STAR levels with departure of staff and providing training at times convenient for programs. Next were resources needed for STARS participation (time, program investments etc.) and STARS training, coaching and support. Maintaining STARS levels with departure of staff has consistently been identified as the highest need over multiple years.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Accessing trainings at time and places convenient for staff.	53%	10
Communication about STARS to Quality program.	16%	3

Resources needed for STARS participation (time, program investments, changes within own program, etc.)	42%	8
Applying STARS practices and precepts to EHS/HS programs.	32%	6
Maintaining STARS levels with departure of staff.	53%	10
STARS training, coaching, and support.	42%	8
Other	11%	2

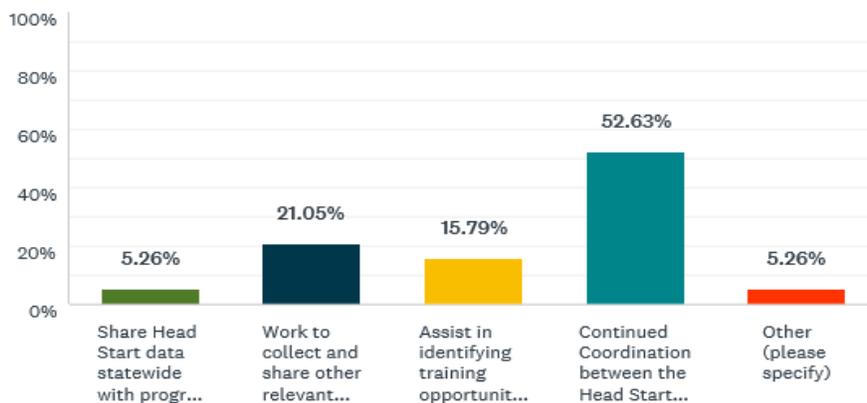
Data Collection System

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. Coordination between Head Start data and the K-12 system 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 then assist in identifying training opportunities on effective data collection and interpretation.

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: 19 Skipped: 1



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Share Head Start data statewide with programs and partners to further the Head Start mission.	5%	1

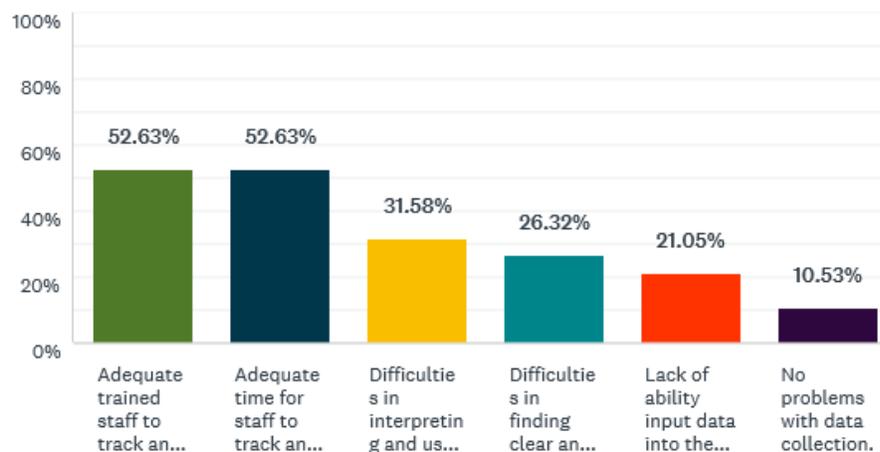
Work to collect and share other relevant early childhood data with Head Start programs.	21%	4
Assist in identifying training opportunities on effective data collection and interpretation.	16%	3
Coordination between the Head Start state system(s) and K-12 systems that includes the assignment of unique State Assigned Identifiers (SASIDs) that remain with students throughout their pre-K-12 public education so that Head Start participants can be included in state data collection efforts, longitudinal studies, and tracking systems to demonstrate long-term educational outcomes.	53%	10
Other (please specify)	5%	1

BARRIERS TO COLLECTING DATA IN EHS/HS PROGRAMS

Respondents were 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 along with adequately trained staff to track and enter data. The next highest responses were difficulties in interpreting and using data for programmatic assessment. These are staff training issues as well as system barriers of data and access.

Data Collection: What are the biggest barriers to sharing and using data about ECE in the next year? (Please choose up to three choices or check the "no problems" option)

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Adequately trained staff to track and enter data.	53%	10
Adequate time for staff to track and enter data.	53%	10

Difficulties in interpreting and using data for programmatic assessment.	32%	6
Difficulties in finding clear and relevant data on ECE and other factors that affect EHS/HS children.	26%	5
Lack of ability to track and use longitudinal data on long-term outcomes.	21%	4
No problems with data collection.	11%	2

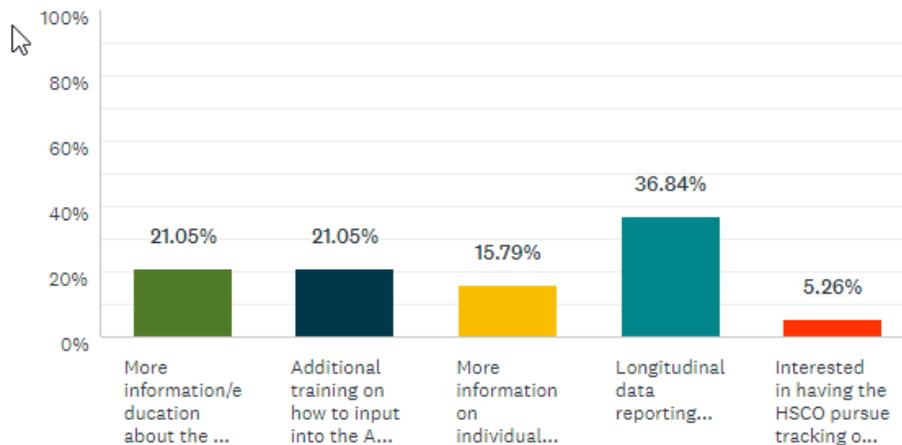
HS and AIM Data System Needs:

Since the majority of the Head Start programs are now putting data into the AIM longitudinal data system and have signed MOUs with the Office of Public Instruction, ongoing needs around this area will be important to track to support programs to be able to access longitudinal data and have good data available.

The highest frequency answer was about longitudinal data reporting plan back to HS programs followed by additional training on data input and deadlines and more information about why this is important for HS in Montana.

Data Collection Efforts: Most HS programs currently have an MOU with the Office of Public Instruction(OPI) to put basic data into the AIM system for the purpose of being able to collect longitudinal data. What are your programmatic needs about AIM data system work ?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	Responses	
More information/education about the why this work is important for HS in Montana.	21%	4
Additional training on how to input into the AIM system and deadlines for completion.	21%	4
More information on individualized program specific training.	16%	3
Longitudinal data reporting plan for information back to HS programs.	37%	7
Interested in having the HSCO pursue tracking of younger students/EHS in the AIM system.	5%	1

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. 7 Respondents identified types of data most useful to them:

- Community assessment data
- Longitudinal data as children progress through k-12.
- WIC and OPA eligibility for Head Start
- Childcare for children with disabilities- number of providers, number of child care closures and new providers
- Homelessness 0-3
- Updated system for data

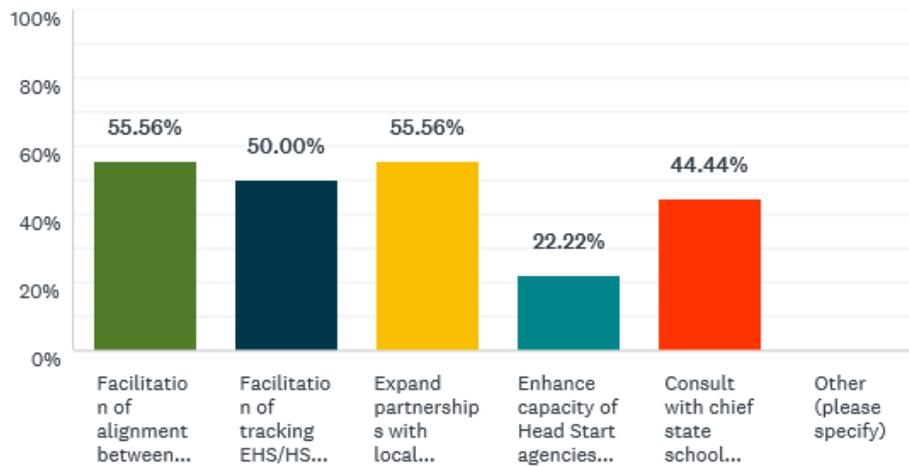
The HSCO office can support training needs by coordinating with statewide entities and HS resources for training support. It is clear that any system work on streamlining data collections, encouraging professional development about data, and continuing the work with OPI around integration of HS programs into the AIM system will help individual programs and Head Start as a whole in Montana to better assess child and programmatic outcomes.

SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

For school transitions the highest priority for grantees is facilitation of alignment between HS curricula and assessments with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and the Montana Early Learning Guidelines and Kindergarten curricula and expand partnerships with local education agencies, including pre-kindergarten and transition-to-kindergarten programs. Next is tracking of HS students as they enter and progress through K-12, the next priority is consult with state school officials to foster understanding of HS, alignment, and partnerships with local LEAs. The largest jump in priority was expand partnerships with LEA's it went from 29% to 56%, this may be due to policy discussions at the federal level about Universal pre-school.

School Transitions: Of the following choices, what would you like to see improve in the next year? (Please select three choices)

Answered: 18 Skipped: 2



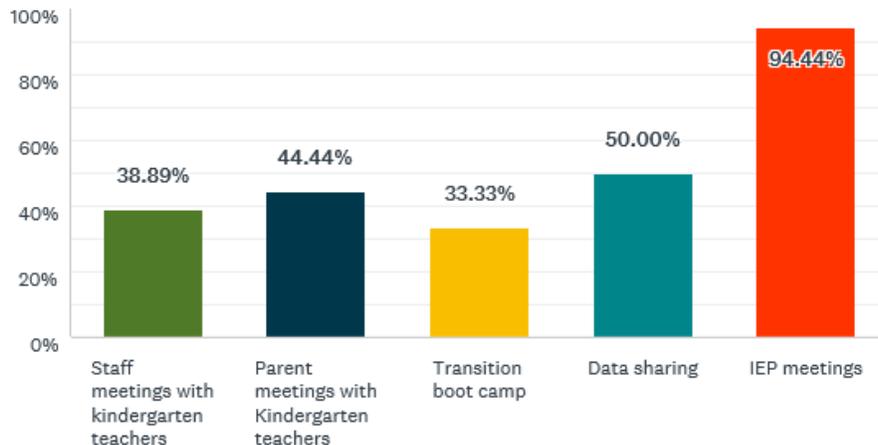
Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Facilitation of alignment between Head Start curricula and assessments with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework with Montana Early Learning Guidelines and Kindergarten curricula.	56%	10
Facilitation of tracking EHS/HS student outcomes as they enter and progress through public schools.	50%	9
Expand partnerships with local education agencies, including pre-kindergarten and transition-to-kindergarten programs.	56%	10
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.	22%	4
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.	44%	8
Other	0%	0

Transition activities in Head Start Communities:

This question was added this year to begin to track activities that happen consistently around transition for EHS/HS students and families.

Please check all practices in place in communities you serve and in which Head Start staff and families are engaged?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 2



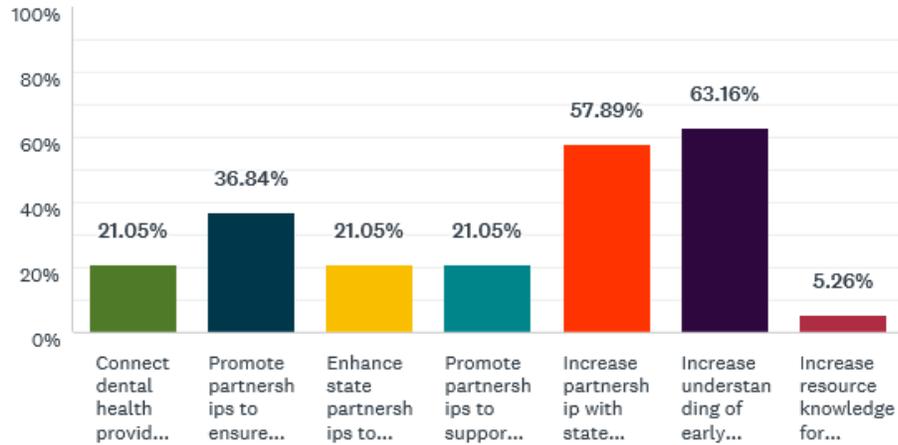
STATE AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

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. Increasing understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) was identified as a top priority, and then ongoing Increased partnerships with state mental health initiatives for low income children and thirdly periodic screening services. These were the same top three priorities as the last several years. Mental health and a focus on childhood trauma were clearly the top two by 21% points between 2 and 3. This is understandable given the last year and a half's events.

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.	21%	4
Promote partnerships to ensure all eligible children receive the full range of 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.	37%	7
Enhance state partnerships to ensure all children are enrolled in health insurance, including Healthy Montana Kids (HMK).	21%	4
Promote partnerships to support unique needs of Early Head Start grantees through linkages with community services such as WIC, La Leche League, Public Health Nursing, and others.	21%	4
Increase partnership with state mental health initiatives to ensure that low income children receive comprehensive mental health services.	58%	11
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.	63%	12
Increase resource knowledge for health care crisis preparedness and linkages to County Health Departments.	5%	1

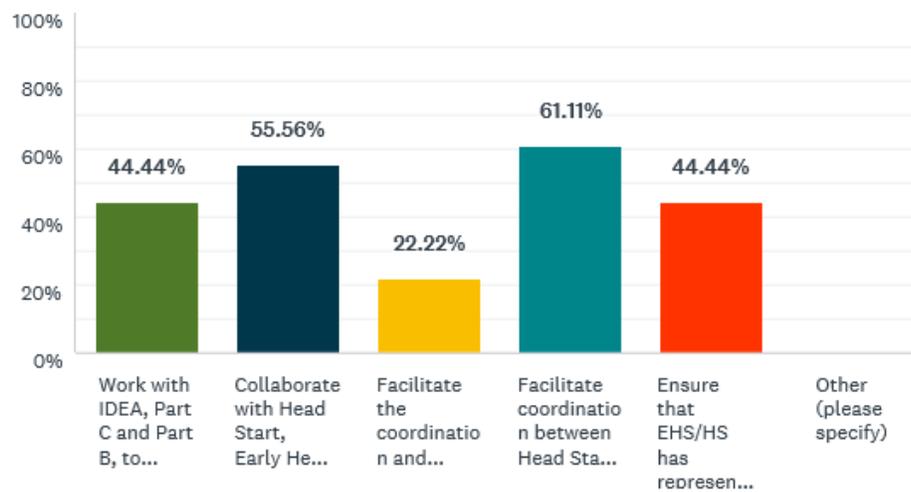
SERVICES TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Facilitate coordination between Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, local Educational Agencies (LEAS/Part B) and Part C/Early intervention 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 was the top area for focus in the next year. 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 and 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 were tied as the next two. This is similar to last year focusing on state level systems to support timely referral and transition processes.

Services to Children with Disabilities: 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: 18 Skipped: 2



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.	44%	8
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.	56%	10
Facilitate the coordination and participation of local Head Start personnel in the state's child identification (Child Find) efforts and other early identification activities.	22%	4
Facilitate coordination between Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, local Educational Agencies (LEAS/Part B) and Part C/Early intervention for approaches that promote the timely referral, evaluation and transition of	61%	11

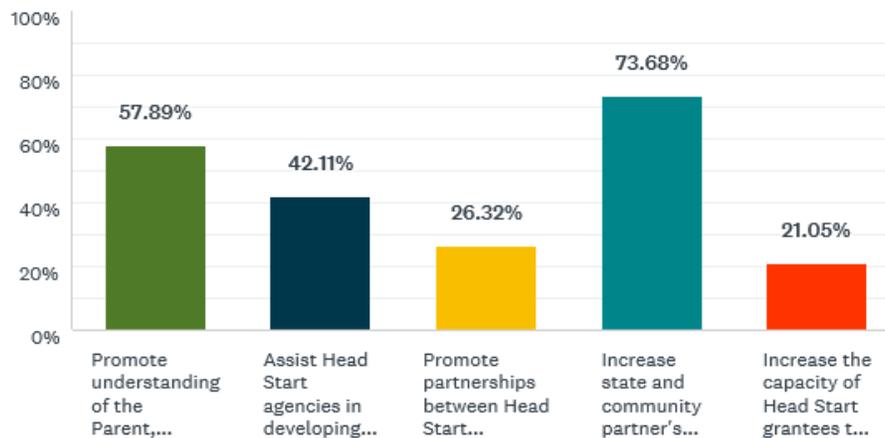
children from Head Start into elementary school in accordance with federal, state and local requirements.		
Ensure that EHS/HS has representation on the Montana Family Support Services Advisory Committee.	44%	8
Other	0	0

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Respondents identified increase state and community partner's awareness of the EHS/HS model and the benefits these programs provide as the top priority, followed by promotion of the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework. Third was, assist Head Start agencies in developing public and private partnerships to increase and coordinate resources. These changed slightly but with emphasis remaining on awareness of EHS/HS to increase community partnership.

Family and Community Partnerships: Of the following choices, what do you think are the most important areas to focus on in the next year? (Please check up to three choices)

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1

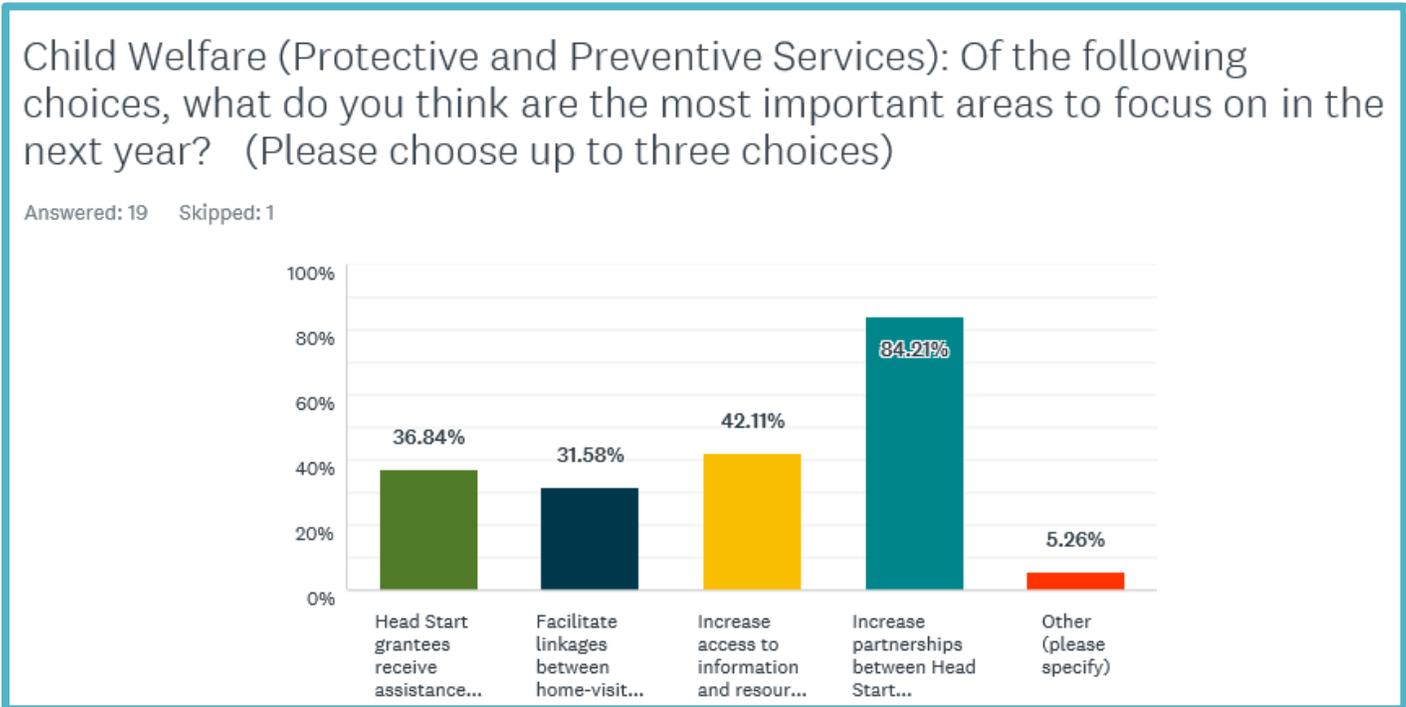


Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Promote understanding of the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework among Head Start grantees and other early child care partners.	58%	11
Assist Head Start agencies in developing public and private partnerships to increase and coordinate resources for Head Start and other early childhood programs.	42%	8
Promote partnerships between Head Start agencies and local early childhood coalitions.	26%	5
Increase state and community partner's awareness of the EHS/HS model and the benefits these programs provide.	74%	14

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.	21%	4
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CHILD WELFARE

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 84%. Increasing access to information and resources that will help Early Head Start and Head Start programs further promote child welfare was the next highest answer.



Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Head Start grantees receive assistance to improve local coordination with child welfare.	37%	7
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.	32%	6
Increase access to information and resources that will help Early Head Start and Head Start programs further promote child welfare.	42%	8
Increase partnerships between Head Start agencies and law enforcement, relevant community-based organizations, and substance abuse and mental health agencies to reduce impact on child development of substance abuse, child abuse and domestic violence.	84%	16

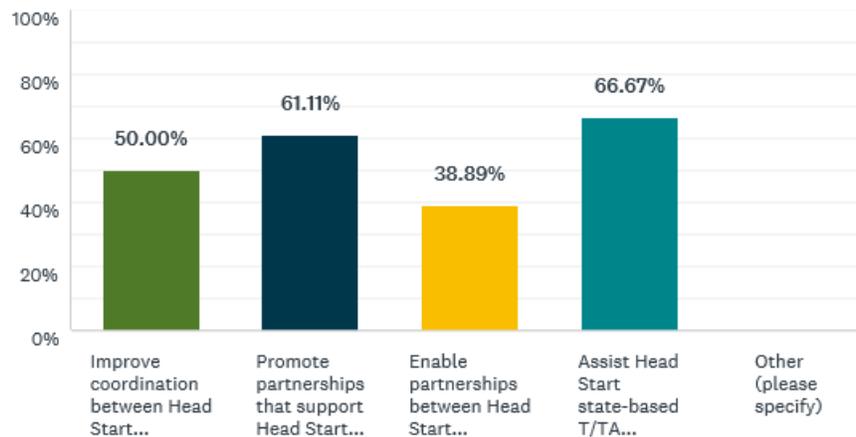
abuse and mental health agencies to reduce the impact on child development of substance abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence.		
Other (please specify)	5%	1

SERVICES TO CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

HSCO could be most useful in the next year in focusing on coordinating the needs of Head Start agencies and the community to strengthen practices for serving children and families experiencing homelessness next was promoting partnerships that support Head Start programs in addressing barriers to servicing children and families that are experiencing homelessness. Serving children experiencing homelessness 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: 18 Skipped: 2



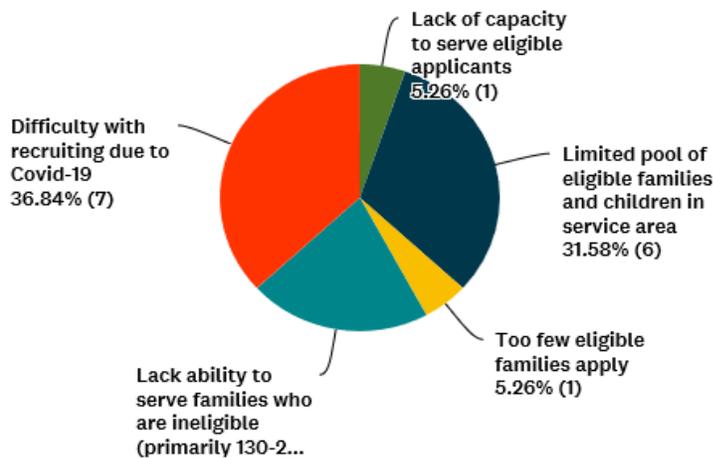
Answer Options	Response Percentage	Response Count
Improve coordination between Head Start agencies and state and local McKinney-Vento coordinators or directors.	50%	9
Promote partnerships that support Head Start agencies in addressing barriers in serving children and families experiencing homelessness.	61%	11
Enable partnerships between Head Start agencies, HUD Continuum of Care networks and state homeless education directors.	39%	7
Assist Head Start T & TA providers to coordinate the needs of Head Start agencies and the community to strengthen practices for serving children and families experiencing homelessness.	67%	12
Other	0%	0

EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

The highest response choice was difficulty with recruiting due to covid-19, next was limited pool of eligible families and children in service area then lack of capacity to serve applicants who are ineligible due to being over income as their most important factors impacting enrollment. As Montana continues to explore expanding birth through 5 early childhood care and education, work to be inclusive of Head Start programs in the mixed delivery system will be important.

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	5%	1
Limited pool of eligible families and children in service area	32%	6
Too few eligible families apply	5%	1
Lack ability to serve families who are ineligible (primarily 130-200% of FPL), but could really use EHS/HS services	21%	4
Difficulty with recruiting due to Covid-19	37%	7

HSCO SUPPORT IN THE COMING YEAR:

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? (9 responses)

- Support enrollment activities and recruitment (3)
- Mental wellness for the students, parents, and staff (1)
- Continued information sharing with programs, state updates (2)
- Continue sharing what HS does in communities we serve (1)
- The need for better/healthier/safer head starts facilities within our tribal areas. (1)
- Professional Development (1)

CONCLUSION:

Within each section the HSCO has highlighted the areas which are the highest ranked and or need. The different tables and graphs provide a picture of Early Head Star and Head Start programmatic needs for Montana. Each program is unique in size, community, and program offerings however when looking at needs within the state early childhood system, commonalities come to the surface and provide a road map for supporting EHS/HS programs at the state level.

Workforce hiring, retention and enrollment challenges were identified in multiple sections as one of the top concerns for EHS/HS programs in Montana. Office of Head Start priorities and covid-19 challenges both clearly weigh into these identified needs. Ongoing Professional Development and support about early childhood mental health issues including ACEs, behavioral management, staff wellness support 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. 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 substance use which is a significant health issue seen across our state and is currently on the increase. This year continuing to look at the impact of COVID-19 was important and the ongoing needs that programs may have for HS children and families in these difficult times will continue to create a need for nimble pivoting to meet programmatic needs to serve family and community needs.

The HSCO uses the needs assessment update to revise the HSCO grant goals and workplan in conjunction with the MTHSA and stakeholders. A big thank you goes to all the Directors who complete the needs assessment survey. It takes time and thought out of a busy work schedule. That input is critical to understanding programmatic needs within the state system. Data was reviewed with the Head Start Association at the October 2021 meeting and additional input provided to clarify responses and glean additional information about programmatic needs. Those thoughts and ideas have been included here as additional information.