

Montana Head Start Collaboration Office

Focus Group Discussion Results 2022

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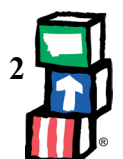


Introduction

The Montana Head Start Collaboration Office completes a Needs Assessment update annually throughout the five-year grant cycle to determine the needs of local Early Head Start and Head Start programs, as well as how the HSCO can support ongoing collaborations, the development of new collaborations, and recommendations for the upcoming year. Due to the foundational shift caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Montana HSCO decided to utilize different data collection methods for the 2022 Needs Assessment update. This change was primarily implemented to meet requests from Head Start Directors and Managers to discuss needs together, rather than use the survey methodology utilized in past years. This year focus group discussions (FGDs), a qualitative data collection method, were conducted to inform the Needs Assessment update.

Methods

Between April and June 2022 five FGDs were conducted by the Montana Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) and the Montana Head Start Association (MTHSA). Four managers meetings were held, all via Zoom, one for each of the managerial positions within Head Start (Disability, Family Engagement, Education, and Health). The managers FGDs were conducted during the last half-hour of the regularly scheduled managers meeting. The one directors meeting was held during the annual directors' retreat, which was a hybrid meeting held in Bozeman, Montana and via Zoom. The managers' meetings were facilitated by Kathy Rich, HSCO Director, and Karen Filipovich, MTHSA Director. The directors meeting was facilitated by a local public health consulting company, Yarrow, LLC. All facilitation was conducted over Zoom. Each FGD was recorded via Zoom, and each recording was sent for transcription to Rev.com. Transcripts were then analyzed using thematic analysis based on grounded theory. Coding was completed by two separate coders, after which results were compared to ensure intercoder reliability. All analyses were conducted during July 2022. The results of these analyses are summarized below according to major themes.



Results

Collaborations and Partnerships

Partnerships were a priority in four of the five FGDs. Partnership discussions highlighted strains on existing partnerships, ongoing partnership successes, collaboration with the State public school system, and partnership opportunities.

Workforce shortages across all industries have strained the collaborative process. These strains can be seen in numerous areas, from other childcare providers serving the same population to health departments that are struggling to offer the supportive services they have historically been able to provide.

Nevertheless, many programs have been able to maintain successful partnerships with a variety of service providers such as mental health consultants, school districts, language assistance, family support services, food banks, extension offices, and more. For a full list of partners mentioned in the FGDs, see the table below.

Table 1. Head Start Partners

Montana Language Services	Logan Health	Family Advocates
School Districts	Community Resource Workers	Kids Nutrition/Hunger Coalition
Family Support Services Advisory Council	MSU Extension Offices	Food Banks
Montana Empowerment Center	Harvest of the Month Programs	Intermountain
Moving Mountains	St. Peter's	Hi-Line Homes
Youth Dynamics	Helena Community Gardens	AltaCare
SNAP	TANF	LEAP
RDNs	Sprout Oral Health	Smiles Across Montana
Cedar Creek	OPI	HSCO

Many participants mentioned the desire for an improved relationship with State agencies and the State public school system in particular. For a list of partnership opportunities mentioned in the FGDs, see Table 2.



Table 2. Potential New / Improved Head Start Partners

Department of Labor and Industry	School Districts	Office of Public Assistance
Department of Justice	CONNECT referral system	Montana Legal Aid
Department of Commerce	Low Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)	DPHHS Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Chambers of Commerce	SNAP	Medicaid / Healthy Montana Kids
School District Transportation Services	CPS	

Some partners were mentioned with specific collaborations in mind: CPS for categorical eligibility for children in foster care; Medicaid / Healthy Montana Kids, which offers financial assistance for medical / dental appointments and transportation services; and the Office of Public Assistance.

“I feel like there could be a ton more collaboration between the OPA...and the families we work with. Because again, we cross over on so many services that they're offering and that our program is eligible for and...we share them in a lot of ways, and I think there's not a lot of communication about it.”

[Family Engagement Manager FGD]

Support for Parents & Families

(Federal Priority: Reaching Children & Families)

Family support was mentioned in all five FGDs and was a priority topic in three. Though Head Start’s philosophy prioritizes families, FGD participants noticed that parental engagement has faltered since the advent of COVID-19. Though several managers have attempted to immerse parents in family engagement opportunities such as handouts, parent meetings, graduation activities, stress-relieving activities, and family celebration events, some have found that getting families to engage remains an uphill battle regardless of the opportunities offered.



“...parents...is where we're seeing disengagement. Even if we're offering how to cope with stress, how to cope with finances, how to normalize the fact that you are really angry at your child all the time. Everyone...doesn't have the emotional capacity to give any more. They can't give you one hour on a Wednesday night anymore. And so, our parent engagement is just nonexistent, really low. Policy council, super low too.”

[Directors FGD]

“We’ve got a little boy...that we've shared information with the mother about youth dynamics here, she'll go there, she'll fill out an application, and then I think she just drops the ball. Well, the school had an IEP scheduled for him on the 12th and mom doesn't show up. How can we poke this mom to get her to do this stuff for her little guy? I don't know, I mean, I've talked to her and talked to her, but it's just like talking to a brick wall and it's the little boy that's suffering.”

[Disabilities Managers FGD]

Potential solutions to problems of this nature include: offering to hold meetings at Head Start if parents are more comfortable there, offering to attend meetings with the parents as an advocate, and reaffirming that the purpose of these meetings is to secure help for their child, including parent involvement in designing the IEP.

Through these hurdles, some FGD participants have found potential solutions. Engaging parents across social services may help, as parents are often a part of more than one program at a time. One participant suggested that Parent Villaging, from <https://parentnation.org/>, could be a helpful tool to elevate parent voices and parent leadership, with both virtual and in-person options. Introducing in-person events, such as Males Matter meetings that focus on fathers and grandfathers, has been successful for one of the participants.

“For our graduations, the parents are busy sewing their ribbon skirts for graduation and they're making children's ribbon skirts and ribbon shirts for the boys. And so, it was really exciting to see them working with that. And so, all our centers are getting ready for graduation.”

[Family Engagement Managers FGD]

During the last year, FGD participants have noticed an increase in parental stress due to difficulties in several areas, including obtaining services for their children, housing and childcare needs, and court disputes. Parents feel great financial and time pressure to secure the services their children need. Participants mentioned that many parents don't realize they have the power to insist upon available resources and services from their children's schools. To ease anxiety associated with their children transitioning from Head Start to Kindergarten, one participant arranged a school readiness fair for parents.



“Stresses are high. I have done more stress reliever activities than ever before.”

[Family Engagement Managers FGD]

Another significant source of stress for parents comes from ensuring their families have enough food to eat. FGD participants indicated that families need an additional supplemental food program, as SNAP and food banks are no longer sufficient due to inflation and the increased cost of food. Providing a solution such as food insecurity packs for families could increase healthy food choices for children, and may also help to prevent and reduce obesity, which participants noted was on the rise.

“The price of fresh fruit and vegetables is a huge barrier for my families.”

[Health Program Managers FGD]

Workforce Capacity

(Federal Priority: Workforce)

Workforce issues were discussed across all five FGDs and in depth in two: the Directors and Education Managers meetings. Workforce capacity conversations centered around staffing shortages, staff burnout, staff retention, employee wages, hiring and onboarding staff, and funding challenges.

A shortage in available, qualified staff has impacted everyone, in every department. Managers and directors have struggled to fill positions, resorting to filling full-time positions with multiple part-time employees and eventually needing to close classrooms due to shortages.

Because the lack of available staff has affected every job sector, available therapists and consultants have been scarce as well. Managers have had to fill many roles, including assisting in classrooms, just to keep their classrooms running. As a result, some managers feel they are simply surviving, instead of being able to provide the support they know their staff needs.

“Up until COVID, I rocked it. I was the person and I felt like I was given the support that I needed to give to my teaching staff, and now it’s survival mode.”

[Education Managers FGD]

The stress from navigating staffing shortages has in turn led to increases in staff burnout and fatigue. FGD participants have noted that their staff’s stress is at an “all-time high” as they’ve battled challenges from high cost of living and lack of energy and resources required to perform



their jobs. Some participating managers have had to find a balance between keeping staff morale high while still delivering quality services to families.

“...I’m going to do what I need to do to keep my families and my staff happy. And that’s not always going to mesh with what my requirements are, but if I don’t have staff, it doesn’t matter. I’m not going to be able to staff a program to even kind of meet requirements.”

[Directors FGD]

Retaining staff has been another challenge reported by numerous FGD participants. Without additional funding for competitive compensation, bonuses, or professional development opportunities, there is little motivation for employees to stay, especially given their feelings of stress and burnout.

FGD participants highlighted the difficulties in maintaining staff numbers due to low employee wages and less than desirable benefits packages. Participants noted that they are consistently losing staff to employers that offer higher pay, and that the only way to solve their compensation problem is to dramatically increase funding from the Office of Head Start.

Local Program Structure

(Federal Priority: Recovery)

Head Start’s program structure, as it relates at the local and state level, was discussed in four of the five FGDs and was a priority in two. These conversations tended to focus on workforce and career development opportunities for staff, expansion of programs, integration with pre-Kindergarten and transitions to universal pre-K, and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID, which was largely considered vis-à-vis how it has impacted staff and what that will mean for the future, was discussed in every FGD, and was a priority in the Health Managers discussion.

There was considerable discussion around the need for increased trainings, certifications, and degree opportunities for Head Start staff. While opinions varied on whether this would result in more staff leaving to enter public school, many thought that improving and offering additional career development opportunities would not only help retain staff but would ensure the provision of quality services. Managers were concerned that having multiple people filling a single position could cause a lower quality of services.

Programs are already utilizing required State licensing and STARS courses to meet both sets of standards with one set of trainings, thereby improving alignment and reducing duplication of efforts. Additional training related ideas included mental health training or certification to meet



the need for mental health professionals, data training, child development training, training that addresses differing abilities, and more in-depth training.

The Education Managers specifically mentioned the need for additional staff hours. There was a general sense that teachers do not have enough time to achieve all that is expected of them. Changes in hours and offerings were also mentioned in connection to student and family needs. These included home-based services, shorter operating hours, and dual language support.

Many participants were concerned with the possibility of integration with Pre-Kindergarten and / or the transition to universal Pre-K. Those areas that already have many Pre-K programs are seeing decreases in Head Start enrollment. Although Build Back Better did not roll out universal Pre-K as was anticipated, many feel that it will remain a legislative topic.

“There is a concern with a nationwide pre-K and what that means for Head Start and how we're integrating into that. And so, I think there could be some more talk about what that means for us...”

[Disability Managers FGD]

Possible changes to Head Start programs due to increased Pre-K programs in Montana could include conversion to Early Head Start, enrollment reduction, and changes in hours of operation. Either way, collaboration with school districts will become even more important. This is an area in which the State can offer assistance, through facilitating collaboration between school districts and Head Start about Pre-K in local communities.

“We shouldn't be competing over little bodies. We should be working to get all of them the best services and needs filled as we can. So, any help on that level would be really nice.”

[Family Engagement Managers FGD]

The impacts of COVID were mentioned in regards to workforce, health effects on staff and families, innovations, and recovery. Some programs are just starting to return to in-person routines, while others have been back for some time. While COVID is no longer playing as large a role as it once did, participants noted some long-term effects resulting from the pandemic. These included accelerating existing workforce shortages and the long-term health effects on staff and teachers. Many anticipate that children will experience long-term social-emotional effects as a result of the pandemic, largely due to isolation, economic impacts, and lack of access to EHS / HS in-person services.

“My observation is that COVID didn't really create any new problems, it just magnified the issues that were already there.”

[Family Engagement Managers FGD]

However, participants were able to identify some benefits that resulted from the pandemic and were hopeful that new and successful innovations could be maintained, and a more critical eye turned on systems that are not working.

Support for Students

Support for students was a priority in both of the FGDs in which it was directly discussed at the Disability and Health Managers meetings. Support for students was more frequently discussed in relation to family support, which is covered earlier in this report. Conversations on student support focused on physical health, mental health, trauma support, and behavioral management.

Head Start programs across the State are able to successfully complete most student screenings.

“Things are going well, we are doing great on end of the year, audios, visions, physicals, dentals, and then getting their follow-up completed.”

[Disability Managers FGD]

However, the workforce capacity and healthcare access issues that were already challenging in rural communities were made more difficult during COVID-19. This meant that many children were not able to be scheduled for well-child exams, exams were delayed, and follow-up care or referrals were often difficult to complete. Multiple programs were also forced to defer toothbrushing due to the pandemic. Dental needs were seen to be particularly high.

“I think in some of our rural communities—I mean, technically all of us are rural, but in some of our smaller counties that we serve—there's been an issue about getting scheduled well-child exams. Well, not scheduled, but completed well-child exams and dental exams on time.”

[Health Managers FGD]

Other physical health concerns centered on obesity and lack of nutritious foods provided by other partners, like schools. Mental health, trauma support, and behavioral management were all closely linked. The biggest concern around mental health was the lack of mental health professionals available to serve children. Ideally, programs would have their own mental health clinicians on staff, but that is not possible for each program.

“They're so full that it is really, really hard to get anybody in to get any kind of mental health services, whether you're an adult or a child.”

[Disability Managers FGD]

Because many children served by Head Start have experienced trauma, it is also important to integrate trauma-informed care into Head Start and mental health professional protocols. Overall, managers and directors have noticed an increase in the number and severity of behavioral health issues. This necessitates additional staff and specialist support.

“I called the school and talked to a couple people and we're going to have a complete team meeting with the grandparent who has them, our behaviorist, the teacher, myself, and make sure that that school is really hearing it from multiple people about this child's behaviors. ...but sometimes it takes a village to really get them to understand what the needs are for the child.”

[Disability Managers FGD]

Enrollment, Recruitment, & Retention of Students

(Federal Priority: Reaching Children & Families)

Enrollment, recruitment, and retention of students was mentioned in three of five FGDs, and was a priority in the Family Managers discussion. Conversations on this topic centered around difficulties retaining students, recruitment and eligibility of students, successes and barriers to enrollment, and solutions to address some of these areas.

Many programs are having to reduce both the number of classrooms and the number of students they can serve due to workforce shortages. This is often a very difficult decision to make, especially with the increase in need and severity of behaviors.

“I think that the only way change is going to come, is by saying ‘this is what we can do with what we're given, at Head Start.’ This is what we can do, with what we're given, state of Montana, and the consequences are these are the families that aren't served. And we didn't get into this business to not serve families, but there are consequences for the lack of resources that we are given to do the critical work that we do. And it's time for other people to feel this as well.”

[Directors FGD]

Some programs are experiencing difficulties enrolling enough students, while others are unable to fully fill their funded enrollment—leaving some eligible students unable to access EHS / HS.

Staff shortages are one of the key barriers to meeting funded enrollment. While there is variation between programs regarding enrollment, most programs are experiencing difficulties with sufficient staffing. Despite these discrepancies, many solutions to problems around enrollment were offered. These included enrollment reduction, conversion to Early Head Start, referrals from other social service programs, a State-wide media campaign that connects and markets for multiple social service programs like SNAP and Head Start, and sharing data lists from SNAP. Most of these suggestions included updated multimedia approaches to ensure the correct information reaches various populations.

Support for Teachers and Staff

Support for teachers and staff was mentioned in four of five FGDs and was a topic of priority in the Education Managers discussion. Support topics discussed centered on staff wellbeing, mental health, and additional training opportunities.

FGD participants reiterated multiple times that teachers and staff have been going above and beyond to serve their students during the COVID-19 pandemic. One manager mentioned that some staff are not claiming hours so they can finish their duties but not overwhelm the budget. However, many managers and directors expressed that a lot of staff are experiencing burnout. Some possible solutions to burnout that were shared included: more flexible working hours to accommodate the changes brought by COVID, mental health benefits, behavioral support, and coaching. Participants mentioned that staff need support outside of their job duties, as there are stressors in their personal lives that may affect their work. With the increase in behavioral issues seen in students, staff are also believed to need additional behavioral-related support. Managers and directors thought that trainings around special education, early intervention, and autism might be the best form of additional behavioral support. There are opportunities to improve the connections between the State and Head Start for both training and coaching, including sharing resources that are provided to directors with managers. Coaching was also mentioned across multiple groups. Managers are finding it difficult to provide coaching for staff as they are already under so much strain to fill staffing gaps. Once training and / or coaching is provided, it is necessary to ensure follow-up so that new skills can be utilized in the classroom.

“It's been really hard to get on with the coaching because you have to just deal with business first, and it's been really stressful.”

[Education Manager FGD]

Some managers have found that family engagement events also help support staff. Others hoped there can be reflection on the lessons learned over the past few years and a focus on rebuilding strong teams.

Referrals & Transitions

Referrals and transitions were mentioned in three of the five FGDs, and in-depth in one (Disability Managers). The limited conversation on this topic points to the prioritization of other topics at this time. Conversations on this topic centered around referrals to Head Start, evaluation of students, referrals out of Head Start, transitions to kindergarten, and collaboration with local school systems.

Referrals to Head Start, evaluation, and transitions focused largely on the relationships and processes between Head Start Programs, Part C, and Part B. While there is often a good relationship between these entities, successful transitions and associated evaluations are often hard to complete. For some children who have been identified as having a disability, a time gap sometimes occurs between identification and evaluation. Some suggestions to improve these transitions and possible gaps include an updated manual for Part C and B, with a parent-focused section around transitions.

“We have a really good working relationship with our part C and get them identified, but then that transition piece and actually getting them evaluated is a real struggle.”

[Disability Managers FGD]

Additional efforts are also needed to “work more with our staff to identify children in the classroom who have never been identified before, that might have a delay, or disability.”

There are also difficulties around follow-through for referrals sent from Head Start to other agencies, including transitions from Head Start to Kindergarten. This is a known gap in the continuation of services for students. Head Start programs across the state are attempting to address this gap by holding transition events such as parent meetings with Head Start and Kindergarten staff and activities that ease the transition for students—such as school cafeteria nutrition activities. Of course, these transitions also depend on the relationships between Head Start programs, local schools, and the State school system. Some programs have great relationships with their local schools, through MOUs or more informal procedures. Others struggle to navigate the transition to part B with the school district in a timely manner.

How HSCO Can Help

While the overall goal of the FGDs and Needs Assessment is to help inform the work of the HSCO in supporting Head Start programs through the state system, some specific areas for assistance were mentioned.

Requests for HSCO assistance aligned with four of the six National HSCO Priorities

- 1 Partner with State childcare systems emphasizing EHS childcare partnership initiatives (EHS-CC)
- 2 Work with State efforts to collect data regarding early childhood programs and outcomes
- 3 Support expansion and access of high-quality workforce and career development opportunities for staff
- 4 Additional regional priorities

The areas mentioned during FGDs included collaboration and alignment between State-level partners, availability of data, workforce development, ensuring that Head Start remains part of the conversation as a part of the State early-childhood system, and resource sharing.

Many FGD participants mentioned the need for improved communication, collaboration, and alignment across State-level programs such as Head Start, Women Infants and Children (WIC), Office of Public Instruction (OPI), and Child Protective Services (CPS). Recommendations for realizing these improvements included collaborative communications on specific topics, moving the HSCO to another bureau or division within the State, including directors in State-level meetings for additional support, statewide sharing of knowledge about new program opportunities, and more connections to local education programs. Improvements to alignment centered on State programs that serve children 0–5 years old, working together to ensure children receive all available services.

“...if you could get all of the Office of Public Assistance benefits workers and their supervisors very attuned to the fact that if anybody's coming through with a child 0–5, they are automatically eligible for their local Head Start program, and to automatically make that referral over to us. That would be fabulous.”

[Family Engagement Managers FGD]

From the government perspective, FGD participants recommended educating legislators on Head Start so new policies do not increase the difficulty of running programs and reevaluating income guidelines federally to create more of a gradual drop than a “cliff” for eligible vs. ineligible families.

Specific requests were made for clarifications on how to appropriately manage Best Beginning and Head Start funds simultaneously, increased partnerships with the Department of Justice and the Department of Labor and Industry, and a State program to address food deserts.

Data collection, sharing, and dissemination was mentioned solely in relation to making AIM data from OPI available. Participants suggested making AIM data directly available, a COPA and Head Start data dashboard, and—if the AIM data does not become available soon—collecting and sharing county-level data on communities being served to help address classroom reductions.

Workforce development as it relates to staff retention was also mentioned across multiple FGDs. FGD participants requested a workforce incentive survey to determine what tactics might attract and keep staff. In a similar vein, participants mentioned that the State should provide more incentives and benefits to Head Start as the largest childcare provider in the state. Participants also recommended that staff retention could be improved through a more efficient and quicker background and fingerprint system, as well as additional coaching and more support for implementation of skills gained in trainings. Coaching needs have been greatly affected by staffing shortages resulting from the pandemic, which reduces the capacity of remaining staff and/or coaches to provide coaching and implementation support.

Participants also wanted to ensure that Head Start remains within the conversation as a part of the State early childhood system. This includes bringing the conversation about childcare and education back to the forefront at the State level and continuing to allow programs to be involved at the State level.

“Virtual opportunities make it easier for programs to be involved.”

[Directors FGD]

Similar to aligning state programs, participants wanted an improvement in sharing resources such as updated resources and materials from other child-related programs, such as WIC; a list of resources available to rural communities, especially regarding food assistance; curricula for social, emotional wellness from birth to three years old; and the list of SNAP participants, with emails. A revised and updated manual for Part C and Part B to send out to school districts and Head Start programs was also requested to enable smoother transitions.

Head Start Successes

Successes over the last year were mentioned in all five FGDs. The majority of successes mentioned centered around supporting teachers, COVID accommodations, engaging families, and supporting student mental health. Support for teachers was highlighted, as workforce

shortages and reductions in staff retention are becoming more common. Head Start programs across the state attempted to alleviate staff burnout through various staff appreciation events, such as coffee trucks, Kindness Matters Month where staff share something that someone did for others to facilitate team building and appreciation, yoga, luncheons, anniversary celebrations, and more. One program, housed in a CAP agency, is using agency emergency housing support to help alleviate housing shortages that widely affect staff recruitment and retention. Another program has started adding an additional administrative day onto Federal holidays, creating a paid four-day weekend for teachers and staff. While the often lengthy process for approving new staff was a major barrier mentioned by multiple FGD participants, some programs have started to address this issue themselves by allowing new employees to start training while awaiting background checks and having fingerprint machines in Head Start buildings.

Multiple FGD participants mentioned retaining COVID-related adjustments that resulted in positive outcomes. Such adjustments included virtual meetings, virtual observations utilizing new technology to continue observations during COVID restrictions, and delivering fun activities to families. Others shared how they were able to effectively utilize COVID funding to support childcare providers.

“Allowing geographically diverse communities to get together and allowing parents to avoid finding childcare for meetings are two benefits of virtual gatherings.”

[Family Managers FGD]

Programs were able to engage families through a wellness corner in the parent newsletter, hiring family advocates, and by addressing cross-cutting barriers through bilingual classrooms and enrollment forms, offering speech services on site, and food insecurity packages.

“What we've been doing as a program to help food insecurity, is we've been using excess funds to actually do food insecurity packs of our own. We've made, several times throughout this year, food insecurity packs for all of our children, including...recipes...for easy access, healthy foods that you can whip up really quick. And so, we'll do a recipe book, and then we'll put the food for those recipes inside the bags. We also make sure that the parents know that this bag is only \$20 worth of food, and it can last you four or five meals. So that's at least two or three days' worth of food, depending on the family size.”

[Health Program Managers FGD]

Programs were able to address an increase in student behavioral health issues by hiring and training behavior service coordinators, and sharing mental health consultants across programs, virtually, to increase availability of mental health services.

Other participants shared several ideas about what could be done to address workforce issues. These ideas included developing a workforce pipeline using teachers as mentors for pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships for students and enrolling all Head Start employees in an employment-based insurance plan to cut costs for employee benefits, thus increasing the budget for salaries and wages.

Equity

(Federal Priority: Equity)

Equity was only mentioned once in one of the five FDGs, during the Directors meeting in reference to the services provided by Montana Language Services. If Equity is going to remain a focus according to Federal priorities, more support in fostering discussions on the topic will be needed.

A follow up Equity discussion was held at the MTHSA Retreat in October , 2022.

Conclusion

The prevailing themes that emerged from the FGDs were improving collaborations and partnerships, support for parents and families, workforce capacity, how the HSCO can assist programs, successes in overcoming barriers and difficulties, and concerns about the program structure.

Partnership recommendations included increased support from the State and improved partnership and alignment with State and Federal programs. Support for parents and families can be facilitated through utilization of family advocates and smoothing transitions between Pre-K and Kindergarten. Workforce capacity, specifically staff retention, can be addressed through improved wages, benefits, and career development. Recommendations for how to address concerns about the future of the program included improving partnerships with other Pre-K providers and planning for how to handle changes in enrollment numbers and potential transitions to universal Pre-K. Overall, managers and directors are proud of how they have managed their programs through the difficulties of the pandemic but are concerned about how wider environmental and societal changes will affect Head Start's future.