



NATIONAL CENTER ON

Program Management and Fiscal Operations



# Community Assessment: The Foundation for Program Planning

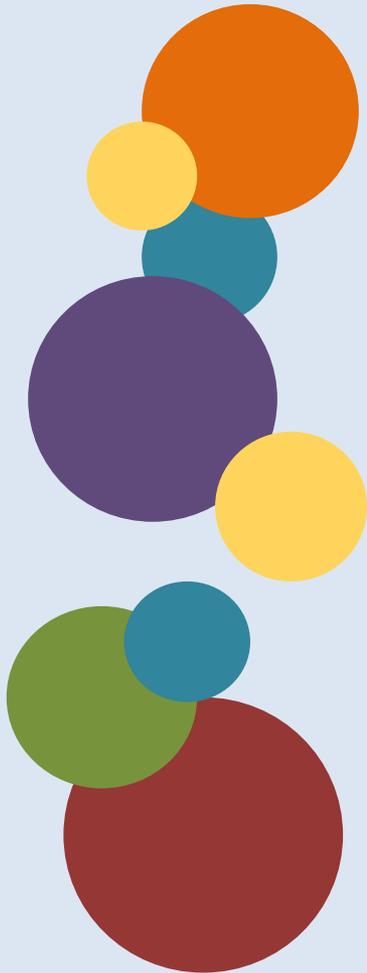
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Tammy Wickstrom

# Session Objectives

In this session participants will:

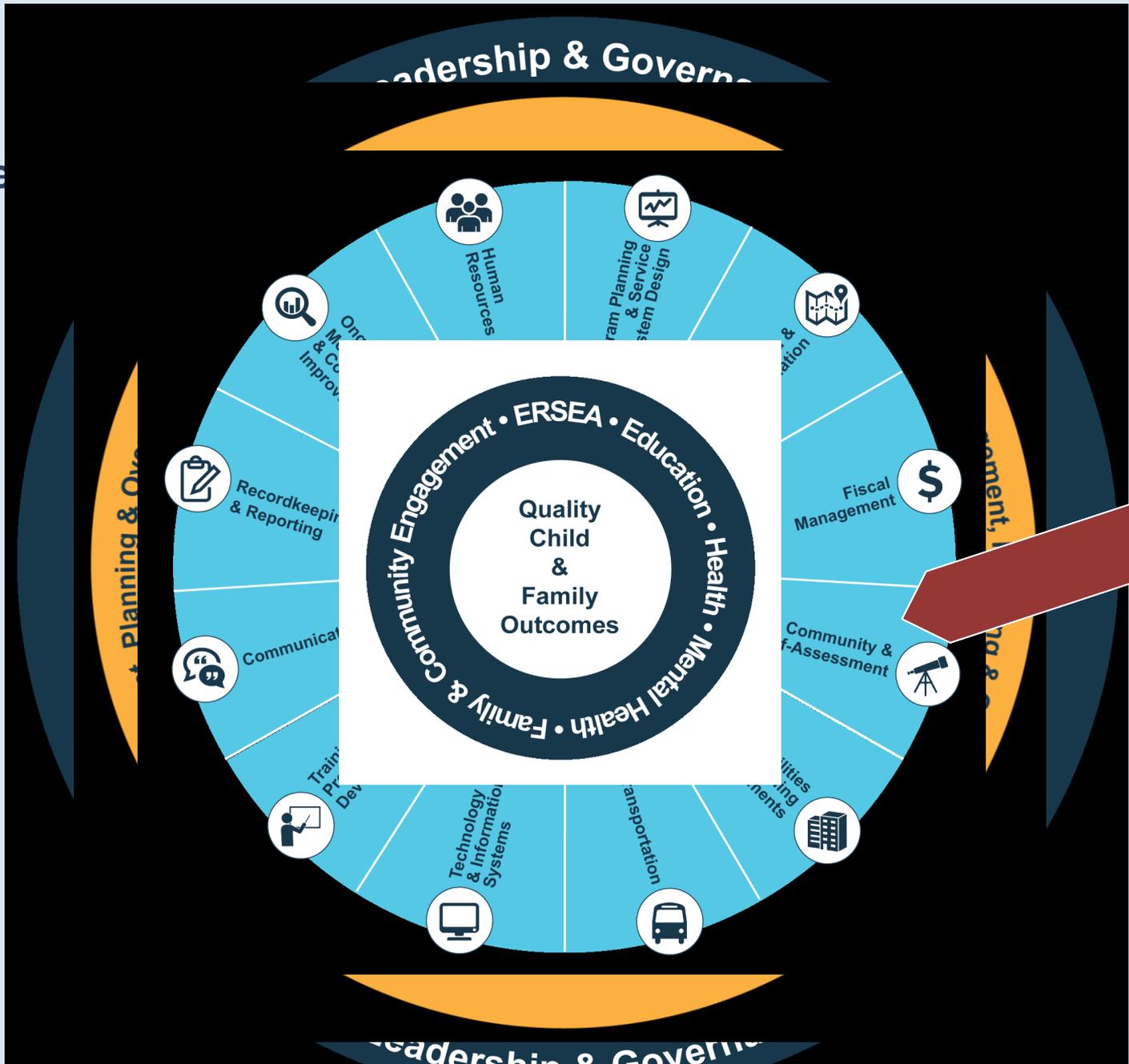
- Examine the purposes and requirements of community assessments
- Recognize the importance of the community assessment in planning and decision-making
- Explore resources and tools for conducting community assessments

# Why Do a Community Assessment?

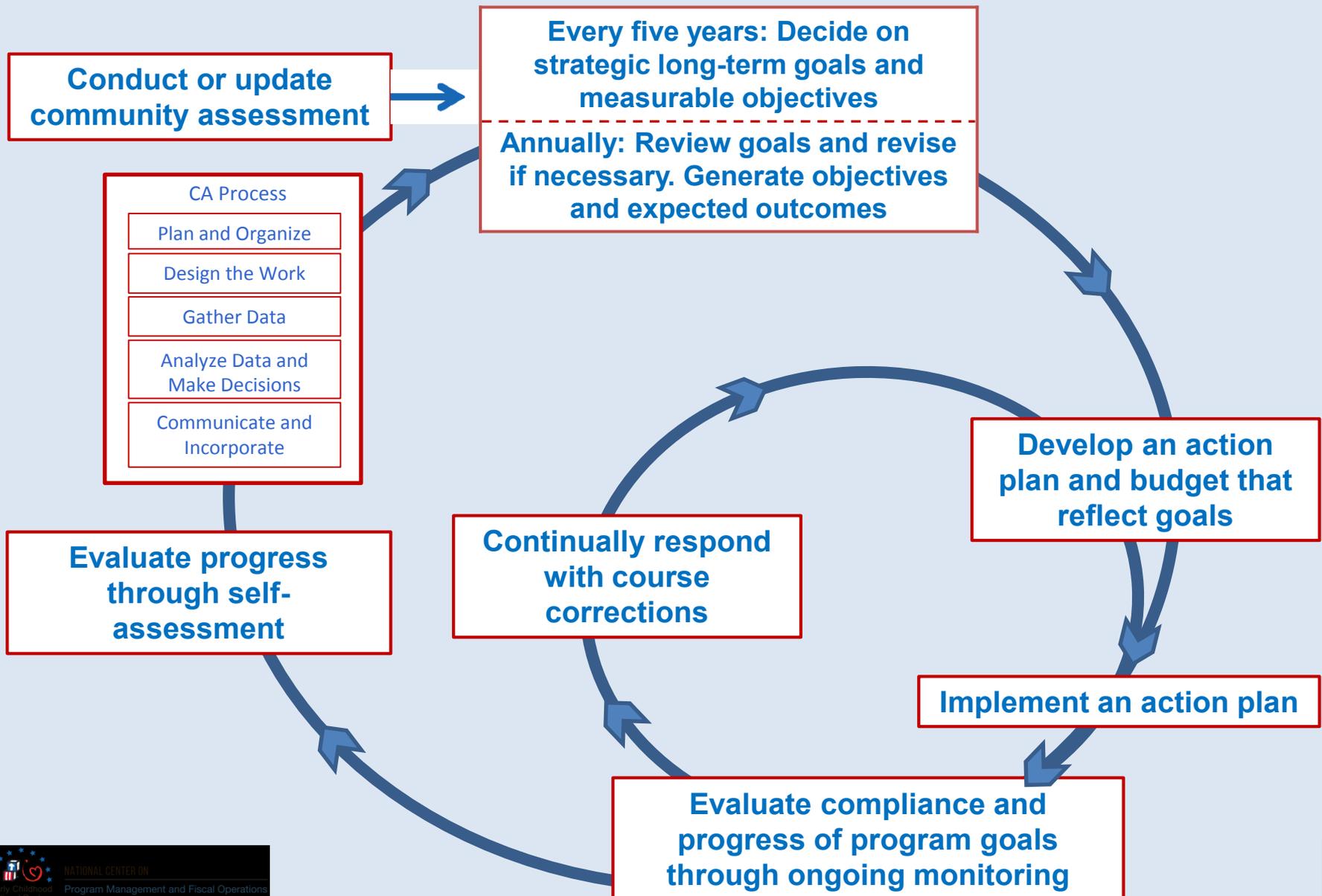


- Meet federal requirements
- Inform decision-making and program planning, including coordinated approaches
- Educate staff and stakeholders
- Address changing priorities and policies
- Respond to trends and changes
- Mobilize community resources
- Maximize community partnerships
- Increase financial resources

# Head Start Management Systems Wheel



# Program Planning Cycle



# 1302.11 (b) Community-wide strategic planning and needs assessment

To design a program that meets community needs and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. The community assessment must use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources....



# What's New?

Strengths  
-based

Eliminates  
prohibition of  
overlapping  
service  
areas

Re-organized  
list of required  
elements

Requires  
data on  
homeless  
children

Requirements  
for annual  
update

# It Starts with the Community Assessment

## Community assessments should:

- Support strategic planning
- Be performed at least once over the five-year grant period
- Describe community strengths, needs, and resources

# A Changing Landscape

What changes are having  
the biggest impact on  
your programs?

# 1302.11 Determining community strengths, needs, and resources

## WHY

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- Solidify your mission
- Identify your service and recruitment areas
- Select your program options and calendar
- Develop your goals and objectives
- Establish selection criteria
- Identify community partners

## WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR

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- Geographic data
- Demographic make-up, shifts and trends
- Other child service programs
- Vulnerable populations
- Education, health, and nutrition and social service needs
- Community resources

## HOW IT HELPS

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- Communicates need to the Office of Head Start
- Gives a current snapshot and baseline
- Helps project trends
- Helps develop strategies
- Helps create continuous quality improvement

# Review and Update the Community Assessment

-  Done annually
-  Community changes
-  Availability of publicly funded pre-K
-  Assessment of publicly funded pre-K
-  Shifts in demographics and resources

# Benefits of Community Assessments

What are the benefits of conducting a community assessment?



# Community Assessments Help Programs

-  1. Make informed decisions about service area plans and delivery
-  2. Understand the needs of families
-  3. Recognize demographic changes and address newly identified needs
-  4. Identify skills and competencies needed in workforce
-  5. Advance cultural competence
-  6. Mobilize community resources and partnerships

# Decision Areas Informed by Community Assessment Data

Recruitment, Selection Criteria,  
and Enrollment Priorities

Strategic Long-Term Goals  
and Measurable Objectives

Services and  
Coordinated  
Approaches

Program Option(s)  
and Calendar

Collaborative Partnerships

Service Area, Recruitment  
Areas, and Program Locations



# Community Assessment: The Foundation for Program Planning

1 Plan and organize

2 Design the work

3 Gather data

4 Analyze data and make decisions

5 Communicate and incorporate

# Step 1:

# Plan and Organize



- Form a CA team
- Specify information to be collected
- Identify necessary resources
- Establish a CA timeline
- Communicate a CA process

# Step 1:

## Plan and Organize *(cont'd)*

Consider that collaboration:

- Engages more community members in planning and implementation
- Increases access to more data sources
- Establishes relationships that will be important for leading actions identified in the community assessment findings



## Step 2:

## Design the Work

- Determine data needs
- Identify internal and external data
- Identify sources
- Develop questions
- Visualize how the data will be displayed

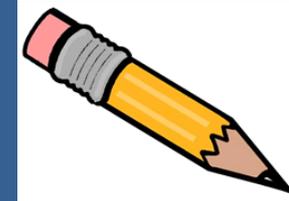


# What Is Data?

1 2 3  
Numbers

text

Words



Pictures

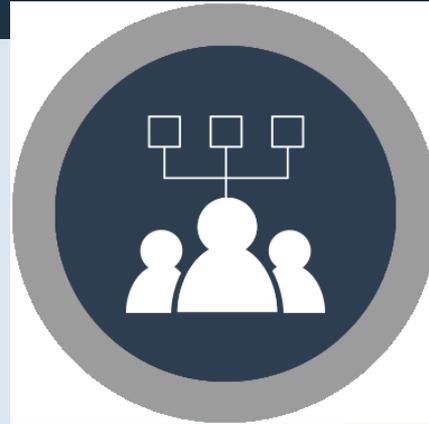


Maps



Research  
Findings

# Types of Data



Internal and External

Quantitative and Qualitative



## Step 3:

# Gather Data

- Determine data collection methods
- Inform stakeholders of the process
- Plan data collection logistics
- Determine how data will be managed
- Gather internal and external data
- Organize the data



## Step 4:

# Analyze and Make Decisions

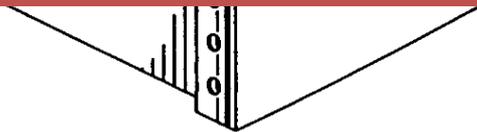
- Review data analysis purpose and procedures
- Identify trends, strengths, and needs
- Make decisions



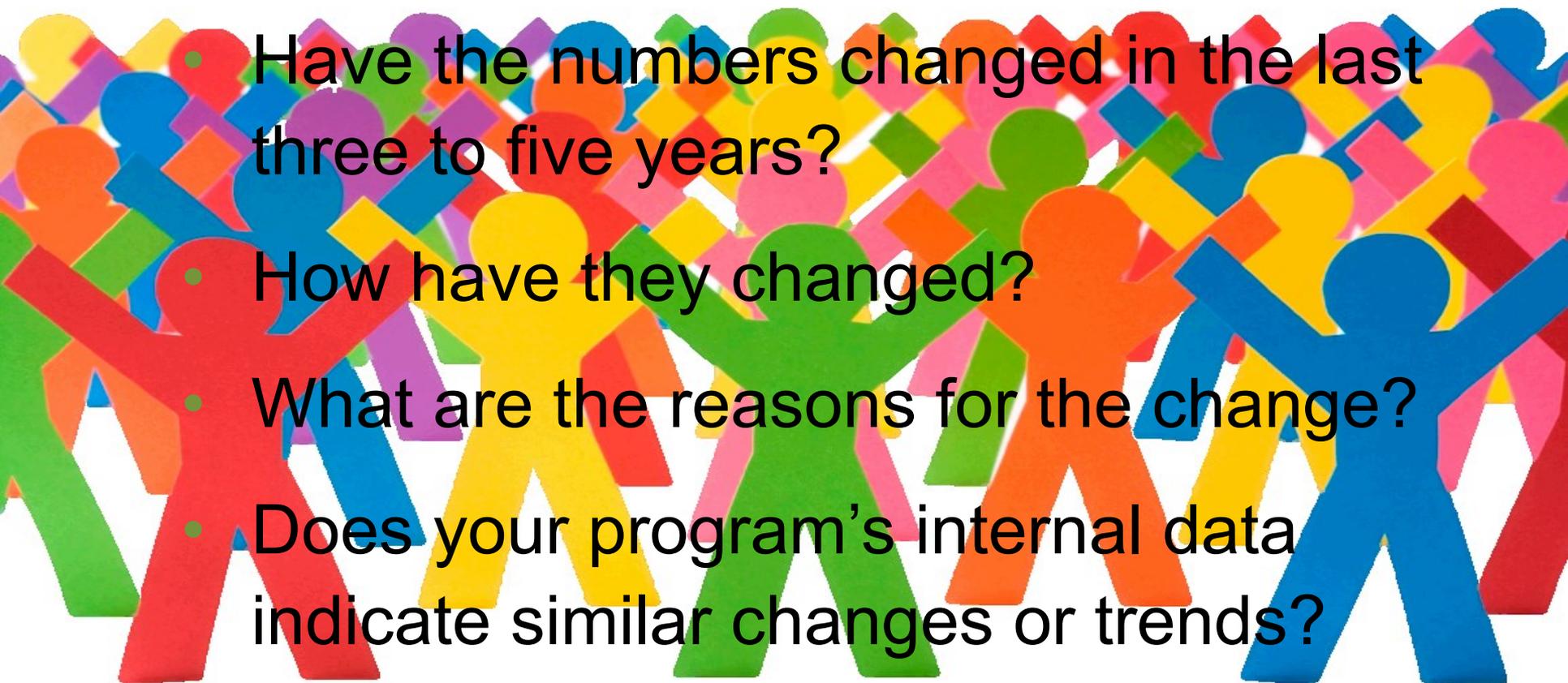
# Analysis – A step by step process



1. Gather and organize the data
2. Think about what the data shows and its possible impact
3. Identify relevant issues and concerns
4. Highlight emerging or existing trends
5. Examine the information related to unmet needs.



# Forecasting Trends

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- Have the numbers changed in the last three to five years?
  - How have they changed?
  - What are the reasons for the change?
  - Does your program's internal data indicate similar changes or trends?

## Step 5:

# Communicate and Incorporate



- Prepare the CA report
- Communicate the CA data and recommendations internally and externally
- Review and update annually
- Incorporate the CA process into the program's strategic and ongoing planning



# Displaying Data

**Data that are:**

**Can be explained in:**

Numbers or percentages



Tables, pie charts, or graphs

Written or spoken words



Narratives or case studies

Geographic photographs

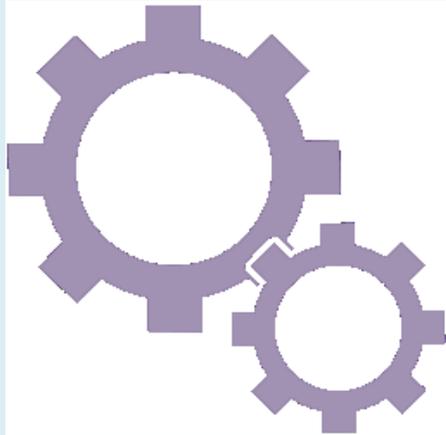


Maps or diagrams

# Using the Community Assessment



- Establish goals and objectives
- Create program options and schedules
- Identify recruitment area and program location
- Establish selection criteria and reserved slots
- Strengthen services
- Build collaborative partnerships



# Establishing Program Goals

Achieving Program Goals  
1302.102

Strategic  
long-term  
goals

Goals for the  
provision of  
various  
program  
services

School  
readiness  
goals

Effective  
health and  
safety  
practices



# What Is a Budget?

**A budget is a:**



“Numerical expression of an organization’s dreams that serves as a guide or measure of acceptable financial performance.”

— *Financial Management for Non-Profit Organizations*

# Program Options and Calendar



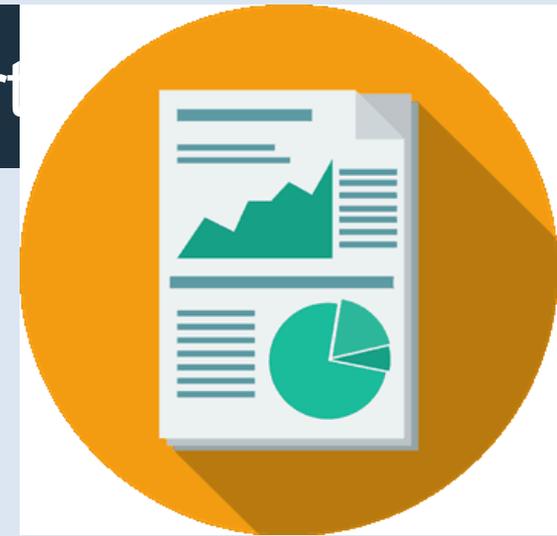
- Center-based, home-based, family child care
- Based on children, family, and community needs
- Determine hours and weeks of service

# Criteria for Recruitment and Selection



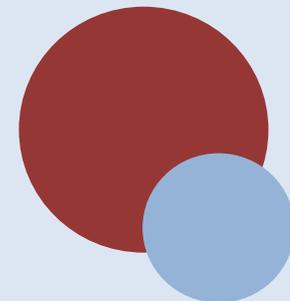
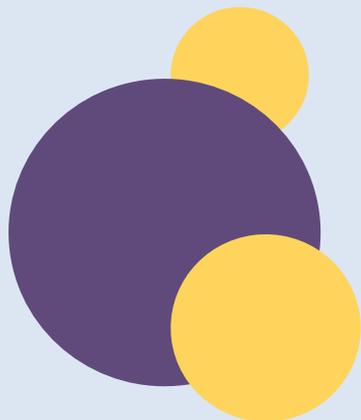
- Consideration of community needs
- Prioritization of vulnerable populations
- Availability of publicly funded pre-K
- Diverse economic backgrounds
- Reserved slots

# The Community Assessment Report

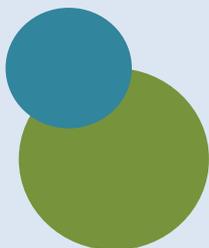


- I. Executive Summary
- II. Table of Contents
- III. Overview of the state of the grantee
- IV. Methodology
- V. Service area data
- VI. Identified needs
- VII. Community resources and strengths
- VIII. Observations and recommendations
- IX. Appendices

# Using Community Assessments in Workplace Decision-Making



- Staff
  - ◆ Knowledge and skills
  - ◆ Connection to the community
- Program placement, design, and hours
- Resources
- Professional development



# Key Takeaways



- Community assessments should inform program planning and service delivery.
- Goals should drive quality and respond to community and program needs.
- Continuous improvement and data-based decision-making needs to be embedded into your practices.