

Getting Started in the Exploration Phase

Needs Assessment

Questions that a program administrator and their team might ask during this phase are:

- What outcome am I (or are we) looking to achieve?
- What is needed to achieve this outcome?
- Does this outcome and initiative or program fit into the current mission and vision of the organization?
- Is this initiative or program needed or desired by the larger community?
- Have we received input from stakeholders?
- Are stakeholders involved in our process? How can we insure their authentic involvement?
- Does the proposed initiative meet requirements set by outside funders, families, the community or partners?
- Is the initiative innovative?
- Will there be buy-in or support and resources to initiate and sustain the initiative?
- Will the project/program/initiative stand the test of time and be effective?

Data to Guide Decision Making

Program administrators should consider the following questions when preparing for initial data collection:

- What do I want to learn?
- What do I already know?
- What data do I already have?
- What data sources currently exist to support this work?

Are there certain data sources that lend themselves better to what you want to learn?

- A survey or questionnaire
- Interviews or focus groups
- Teacher's anecdotal notes
- Formal assessment tools such as the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) or the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- State licensing reports
- Child portfolios, work samples or assessments
- Quality rating and improvement system data

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