



Early Learning Outcomes Framework  
IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT

Implementation Guide:  
Using the ELOF to Inform  
Assessment



# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Assess: Aligning Your Assessment Instrument with the ELOF .....	6
Plan: Developing Your Action Plan .....	8
Act: Putting Plans into Action.....	11
Wrapping Up .....	13
Appendix A: Resource Links .....	14
Appendix B: Building Effective Implementation Teams.....	16
Appendix C: Implementation Team Meeting Preparation Checklists.....	18
Appendix D: Alignment Tool for Assessment and the ELOF .....	20
Appendix E: Developing Your Action Plan .....	37
Appendix F: Reflection Questions .....	39

# Introduction

## What Is the Purpose of This Implementation Guide?

Early Head Start and Head Start programs must use child assessment instruments that are aligned with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* (ELOF).

Using assessment instruments that are aligned with the ELOF ensures that your program assesses children's development and learning in all domains important for school and long-term success.

After working through this guide, you will know how to:

- Align a child assessment instrument with the ELOF
- Make informed decisions to keep, supplement, or replace an assessment instrument
- Support direct service staff in understanding the relationship between an assessment instrument and the ELOF

Assessment of children's developmental progress helps you plan and implement individualized curriculum. Refer to the implementation guide,

Using the ELOF to Inform Curriculum Planning and Implementation, to review the alignment of your curriculum with the ELOF. You might want to conduct these related alignment processes together.

## What Do the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) Say about Assessments?

According to the HSPPS, the purpose of assessment is for individualization and to improve teaching practices and home visit strategies (§1302.33(b)(1) and §1302.33(b)(2)). Assessments can also sometimes lead to referrals (§1303.33(b)(3)). The HSPPS require your program to use assessments that are:

- Aligned with the goals in the ELOF §1302.33(b)(1)
- Standardized and structured (observation-based or direct) §1302.33(b)(1)
- Valid and reliable §1302.33(c)(1)
- For the population of children served §1302.33(c)(1)

## What about Screening?

This guide focuses on assessment for individualization. For more information on screening, refer to the HSPPS §1302.33(a) and the *Compendium of Screening Measures for Young Children* ([https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/screening\\_compendium\\_march2014.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/screening_compendium_march2014.pdf)).

- Conducted by trained personnel §1302.33(c)(1)
- Age, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate §1302.33(c)(1)
- Appropriate for children with disabilities §1302.33(c)(1)

See “Resource Links” in [Appendix A](#) for more information on each of these elements.

## Who Is the Audience for This Guide?

Education managers can use this guide, with an implementation team, to understand if your program’s child assessment instrument is aligned with the ELOF. Implementation teams are needed to effectively enhance program practices. Form a team to collaborate in the alignment and planning processes. Use the “Building Effective Implementation Teams” resource (see [Appendix B](#)) to help you decide:

- Who should participate in aligning your assessment instrument(s) with the ELOF and making decisions based on alignment
- Which staff and stakeholders should provide input during this process

Potential team members include:

- Program leaders, such as directors, managers (e.g., disabilities and health managers), and supervisors
- Governing body and policy council members
- Families, including those who speak home languages other than English if your program has children who are dual language learners (DLLs)
- Direct service staff, such as teachers, home visitors, and family child care providers

- Representatives of Local Education Agencies (LEAs), early intervention providers, and other community partners, including those with a background and expertise in disabilities

Team members need to clearly and consistently communicate with each other to ensure effective implementation. Throughout the process, use the “Implementation Team Meeting Preparation Checklists” (see [Appendix C](#)) to help your team communicate and plan effective meetings.

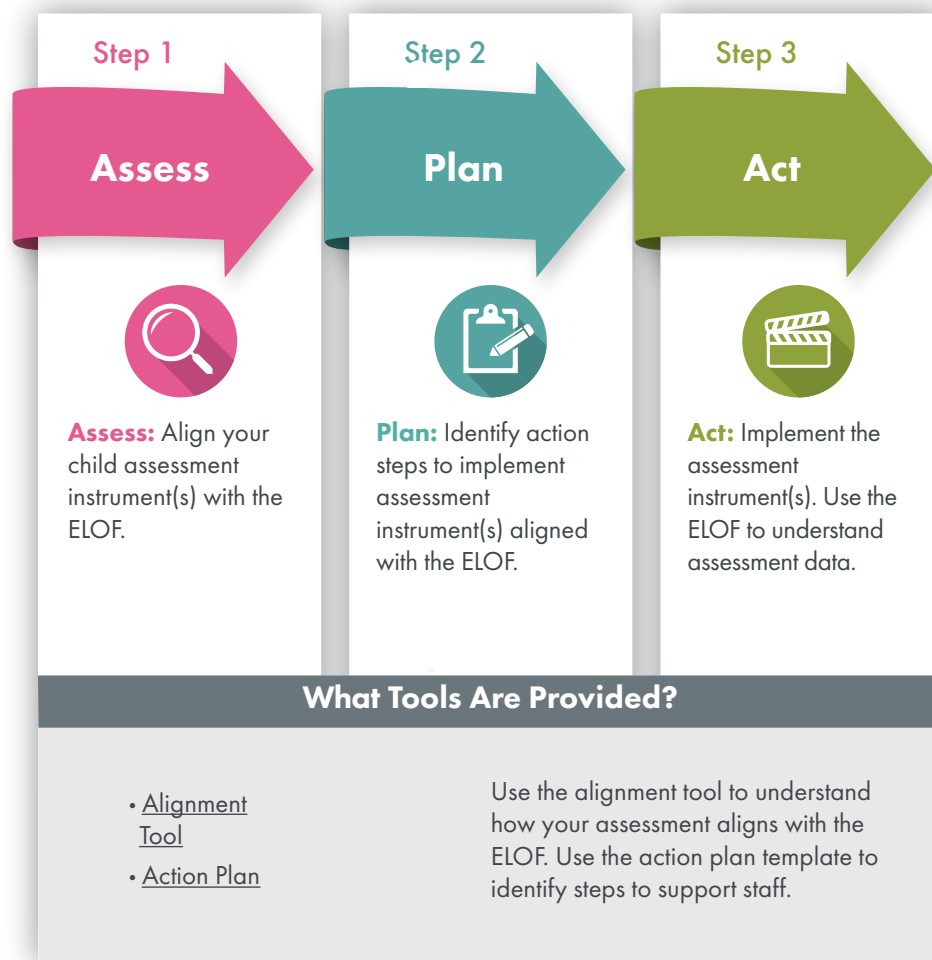
## What Are the Steps for Aligning an Assessment Instrument with the ELOF?

Aligning your program’s assessment instrument with the ELOF will be a process that takes time and teamwork. This guide uses the Assess-Plan-Act reflective approach for aligning a child assessment instrument with the ELOF. There are three steps in this process:

- Step 1 ASSESS: Align your child assessment instrument(s) with the ELOF, and make a decision to keep, supplement, or replace your assessment instrument(s).
- Step 2 PLAN: Identify action steps to support staff in implementing assessment instrument(s) aligned with the ELOF.
- Step 3 ACT: Implement the assessment instrument(s), and use the ELOF to understand assessment data.

There are two main tools you can use to support this process: “Alignment Tool for Assessment and the ELOF” (see [Appendix D](#)) and “Program Supports: Action Plan” (see [Appendix E](#)).

# Roadmap for Aligning an Assessment with the ELOF



This guide is organized into three sections according to the Assess, Plan, and Act steps. The activities and tools in each step are described in the body of the guide. All of the handouts and supporting resources are located in the Appendices at the end of the guide.

## Step 1

### Assess

In this step, align your assessment with the ELOF and make a decision to keep, supplement, or replace your assessment instrument.

## Aligning Your Assessment Instrument with the ELOF

Follow the steps below to align your program’s assessment instrument with the ELOF, and reflect on the results. The alignment process will help you understand whether and how your program’s assessment measures children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts as described in the ELOF.

1. Align your assessment instrument with the ELOF using the “Alignment Tool for Assessment and the ELOF” (see [Appendix D](#)).
2. Reflect on findings from the alignment using the following summary questions located at the end of the alignment tool:
  - Which of the ELOF domains does the assessment instrument fully address?
  - Are there ELOF domains and/or sub-domains that are not well addressed in the assessment instrument? If so, which one(s)?
  - Based on what you learned from this alignment process, identify any gaps between the assessment instrument and the ELOF.
3. Decide, with the implementation team, whether your current instrument:
  - Mostly aligns with the ELOF
  - Needs to be supplemented with an additional assessment instrument or instruments
  - Needs to be replaced with another assessment instrument that measures children’s development and learning based on the ELOF domains and sub-domains

As you decide, make sure to consider the other requirements related to assessment in the HSPPS §1302.33 (see [Appendix A](#)).

Reflect on the gaps that you find. Are they significant or minor? If the assessment instrument does not gather data on many of the ELOF domains or sub-domains, your team might decide that the gaps are significant. Likewise, if the assessment instrument does not fully assess children’s progress toward your program’s school readiness goals, your team might decide that the gaps are significant. Read the examples on the following page to see how two different programs made this decision.

### What Does Alignment Mean?

Alignment means identifying the elements that correspond between two things. In this guide, alignment refers to lining up items from your assessment instrument with the ELOF. This process allows you to see if your assessment instrument measures most or all of the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the ELOF.

## Making Decisions about Assessment Instruments

### Sunshine Community Action Agency Decides to Add a Supplemental Instrument

Kiera, the education manager at Sunshine Community Action Agency, leads the implementation team in aligning the program's preschool assessment instrument with the ELOF. The implementation team then reviews findings from the alignment process. They find that the preschool assessment instrument does not address a few of the sub-domains within the ELOF domain Approaches to Learning. Before making a final decision, the team discusses the cost and staff training a supplemental instrument will require. They decide to add a supplemental assessment instrument that more fully addresses Approaches to Learning.



### New Leaf Child and Family Community Services Decides to Keep Its Assessment Instrument

The implementation team, led by Sonya, the education manager at New Leaf Child and Family Community Services, find that their program's infant/toddler assessment instrument is mostly aligned with the ELOF. They decide to keep using the assessment instrument because it measures most of children's skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the ELOF. The assessment is also valid and reliable to use with all children, including children who are DLLs and children with disabilities.

 Step 2 Plan

In the Assess step, you and the team made a decision about your assessment instrument. Now you will make a plan to support direct service staff in:

- Supplementing or replacing the assessment instrument, and/or
- Understanding the relationship between the ELOF and assessment

## Developing Your Action Plan

Follow the steps below to create an action plan.

1. Reflect on how you can support direct service staff and others in assessment in each of these areas related to assessment. Write your notes in the guiding questions worksheet (see [Appendix E](#)).
  - Communication: How will you share your work on the alignment with staff and families, including families who do not speak English? How will you communicate the importance of using an assessment instrument that is aligned with the ELOF? How will you communicate any changes in your program's assessment instrument(s) to staff and families?
  - Professional Development: If you plan to supplement or replace your current assessment instrument with another instrument, what training will staff need? What training will they need in how the ELOF can support their understanding of assessment data?
    - » Will staff need training related to new or current assessment instruments to assess the development of children who are DLLs?
    - » Do you have qualified bilingual staff who can conduct the assessment in children's home language(s)?
    - » Will staff need training in new or current assessment instruments as they complete assessments of children with disabilities?
  - Access to Materials and Equipment: If you are choosing a new or supplemental assessment instrument, what research will you need to do about the assessment instrument? How will you access the assessment and its materials? Will you have assessment materials in all the languages needed, and will you ensure there are qualified bilingual persons available to assess children?
  - Time: How much time will you need in order to research, purchase, and share a new assessment instrument? How will you schedule time for additional training?
2. Identify specific action steps that you need to take to provide program supports. Write these action steps in the action plan table (see [Appendix E](#)).<sup>1</sup> Use the vignettes on the following pages to spark your thinking.
3. Break down each action step into specific tasks that will help you complete the action step. Identify key people who need to be involved. Write down any additional resources you need to complete the action step. Complete the table with this information.
4. Set a deadline for your program to accomplish each action step.
5. In the final column of the table, describe what data or evidence you might use to know you are making progress on the action step.

<sup>1</sup>The steps in the table mirror steps from the Head Start National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations action plan for programs (<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/planning-topic-4.pdf>).



## Action Planning

### Sunshine Community Action Agency Finds a Supplemental Assessment Instrument

Kiera and the implementation team decided to add a supplemental assessment instrument to their program. The team discusses how they will identify the appropriate supplemental instrument and put it in place. The team talks through different considerations to keep in mind when searching for a new assessment. For example, they talk about validity and reliability, cost, and training requirements.

They decide that Kiera will do some research about what instruments exist that measure children's skills, behaviors, and concepts in the sub-domains of Approaches to Learning. The team knows that another priority, in addition to researching and purchasing the additional instrument, will be to inform staff and families about it.

They make a plan to share information about the supplemental assessment instrument. In the table below, you will see the team's proposed action steps, with step one fully planned out.

Action Plan: Sunshine Community Action Agency					
Action Step	How?	Who?	What?	When?	Action Step Complete?
	How will you take action?	Who needs to be involved?	What resources do you need?	When is your target deadline?	How will you know your action step worked?
<b>Action Step 1</b> Identify and obtain new assessment instrument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research potential new instruments</li> <li>- Review budget</li> <li>- Discuss validity and reliability of instruments with assessment expert(s)</li> <li>- Purchase new instrument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education manager (Kiera)</li> <li>- Program director</li> <li>- Policy council</li> <li>- Direct service staff</li> <li>- Families</li> <li>- Assessment expert(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internet to research instruments</li> <li>- Time to discuss instruments with program community</li> </ul>	One month from today	New assessment instrument agreed upon and chosen by the team
<b>Action Step 2</b> Inform all families of changes					
<b>Action Step 3</b> Share information with direct service staff					

## New Leaf Child and Family Community Services Plans for Training

Sonya and the implementation team have decided to keep their current assessment instrument. Now they want to ensure that staff and families understand how it measures children’s progress in all of the ELOF domains and sub-domains.

Sonya plans to facilitate a presentation and discussion about the alignment process at the program’s next all-staff meeting. She also works with the family services managers to put together a plan to share the information with program families at the next policy council meeting. When discussing next steps, the team thinks it might be helpful to develop a presentation for staff about how the ELOF can be used as a resource to learn about children’s developmental progressions.

This information could help staff use assessment data to better understand an individual child’s development. In the table below, you will see two of the team’s proposed action steps, with step two fully planned out.

Action Plan: New Leaf Child and Family Community Services					
Action Step	How?	Who?	What?	When?	Action Step Complete?
	How will you take action?	Who needs to be involved?	What resources do you need?	When is your target deadline?	How will you know your action step worked?
<b>Action Step 1</b> <i>Communicate with staff and families about the alignment process</i>					
<b>Action Step 2</b> <i>Train staff in how to use the ELOF in the assessment process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a plan for presentation</li> <li>- Identify who will train staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education manager (Sonya)</li> <li>- Direct service staff</li> <li>- T/TA provider(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Copies of the ELOF and of assessment data</li> <li>- Time for training and follow-up</li> <li>- Training materials</li> </ul>	<i>Three months from today</i>	<i>Training is complete, follow-ups scheduled, and staff have begun to use the ELOF in the assessment process</i>



### Step 3

## Act

Now that you have a plan in place to support staff as they implement changes related to assessment, it's time to take action.

## Putting Plans into Action

As you implement your action steps, some things might go as planned, but some challenges may arise. Communicate with staff about the process. Identify next steps to continually strengthen your program's approach to assessment. Use the questions below to reflect on the process. Jot down any notes on the "Reflection Questions" worksheet (see [Appendix F](#)).

- How are you doing on your action steps?
- What's working? Why?
- What isn't working? How do you need to adjust?
- What do you notice about staff's efforts if using a new or supplemental assessment instrument?
- What challenges are staff facing if using a supplemental assessment instrument?
- What do you notice about staff's efforts to use the ELOF as a resource when reviewing assessment data?
- What additional action steps can you take to better support program staff?

Use the vignettes on the following page to spark your thinking.

## Bringing It All Together

### **Sunshine Community Action Agency Puts the Supplemental Assessment Instrument in Place**

Kiera gives presentations on the alignment and the supplemental instrument to all levels of program staff. She also presents the supplemental instrument to the policy council and receives their input on how to communicate the change with families. A representative from the policy council agrees to write a short piece for the program bulletin so that families will learn about the supplemental instrument. The implementation team reflects on the process of communicating about the supplemental instrument with staff and families. They decide that in-person meetings seem to be working well, so they invite the family services manager to hold a meeting with families.

In her presentations with staff and the policy council, Kiera takes time to explain why the program adopted a new tool to assess Approaches to Learning. This domain is an area of child development that both staff and parents are unfamiliar with. She explains how progress in this domain is important for a child's success in school and how the program will use the assessment data to individualize and improve teaching practices in this area of child development.

As they talk about the supplemental instrument with staff and families, the implementation team members continually check in with one another to ensure that everyone's questions and concerns are being heard and answered.

### **New Leaf Child and Family Community Services Uses the ELOF as a Tool to Understand Assessment Data**

During the program's next all-staff meeting, Sonya shares the completed assessment alignment tool. They discuss what alignment means, why it is important, and how their existing assessment instrument aligns with the ELOF.

As part of the discussion on using the ELOF with assessment, Sonya shares the ELOF with staff members. She also gives them examples of child assessment data in one domain. Sonya asks the staff to look at the data first. Then, she invites staff to read about children's developmental progressions in that ELOF domain. Sonya and the staff discuss how using the ELOF as a resource while reviewing assessment data helps the staff gain a more comprehensive picture of the child's development and learning. Sonya asks staff to find where the child might be moving next in her development. They also talk about how they might support developing skills, concepts, and behaviors. She explains how the ELOF can be a valuable tool for understanding the larger picture of child development. This understanding helps program staff strengthen their teaching practices to promote positive outcomes for all children.

### What Can You Learn from These Vignettes?

After making decisions related to their assessments, the implementation teams worked toward taking their action steps. As part of the process, Kiera and Sonya discussed the changes with staff and families. Through reflection and discussion, they noticed where staff needed more support and planned next steps to encourage staff in the learning process. Clear communication helped both Kiera and Sonya ask questions, discuss issues, and plan next steps.

# Wrapping Up

Making changes related to your assessment instrument may feel challenging, but using an assessment instrument that is aligned with the ELOF is important for a program. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you make any changes related to assessment:

- Continue to check in with program leaders, staff, and families around their understanding and use of the ELOF
- Communicate with program staff and families about any final decisions or changes
- Ensure that program staff have adequate training on any new assessment instruments
- Ensure that coaches are supporting education staff as they learn to use assessment instruments
- Involve bilingual staff and families in choosing, implementing, and interpreting assessments of children who are DLLs
- Involve disabilities services staff in choosing, implementing, and interpreting assessments of children with identified disabilities

Look for additional support from these resources:

- Regional Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) providers
- Assessment experts at local universities
- Resources related to assessment on the ECLKC (<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment>)

In addition to aligning your assessment instrument with the ELOF, check out the other guides in the ELOF Implementation Toolkit:

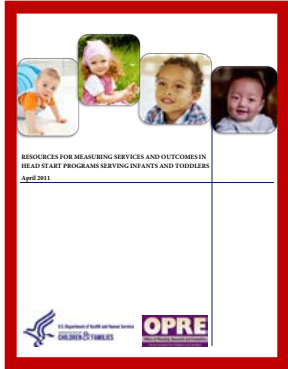
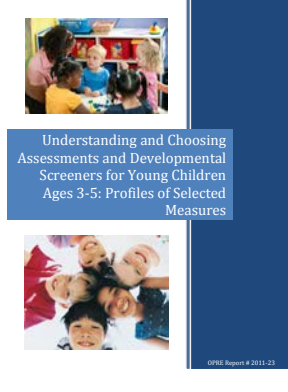
- Introduction to Using the ELOF
- Using the ELOF to Inform Curriculum Planning and Implementation
- Using the ELOF to Establish School Readiness Goals
- Using the ELOF to Inform Professional Development

---

This document was developed with funds from Grant #90HC0012-01-00 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care, by the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.

## Appendix A: Resource Links

Use these resources to learn more about assessment in early childhood.

Resource	Description	Citation	Website Link
<p><i>Resources for Measuring Services and Outcomes in Head Start Programs Serving Infants and Toddlers</i></p> 	<p>This resource provides information on selecting assessment instruments for infants and toddlers. It also discusses validity and reliability.</p>	<p>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. <i>Resources for Measuring Services and Outcomes in Head Start Programs Serving Infants and Toddlers</i>. Washington, D.C., April 2011.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/resources_for_measuring_services_and_outcomes.pdf">http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/resources_for_measuring_services_and_outcomes.pdf</a></p>
<p><i>Understanding and Choosing Assessments and Developmental Screeners for Young Children Ages 3–5: Profiles of Selected Measures</i></p> 	<p>This resource offers information on choosing assessment instruments for preschool children. It also discusses validity and reliability.</p>	<p>Halle, Tamara; Martha Zaslow, Julia Wessel, Shannon Moodie, Kristen Darling-Churchill. <i>Understanding and Choosing Assessments and Developmental Screeners for Young Children Ages 3–5: Profiles of Selected Measures</i>. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, 2011.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/screeners_final.pdf">http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/screeners_final.pdf</a></p>

## Appendix A (cont'd)

Resource	Description	Citation	Website Link
<p><i>Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How</i></p> 	<p>This resource offers a comprehensive overview of assessment in early childhood. It includes considerations for assessment instruments, the purposes of assessment, and planning based on assessment.</p>	<p>National Research Council. <i>Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How</i>. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2008.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12446/early-childhood-assessment-why-what-and-how">http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12446/early-childhood-assessment-why-what-and-how</a></p>
<p>"Assessment of Young Dual Language Learners in Preschool"</p> 	<p>This resource offers background, research, and strategies in assessing young children who are DLLs.</p>	<p>Espinosa, Linda; Vera Gutiérrez-Clellen. "Assessment of Young Dual Language Learners in Preschool." <i>California's Best Practices for Young Dual Language Learners: Research Overview Papers</i>. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, 2013.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/documents/dllresearchpapers.pdf">http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/documents/dllresearchpapers.pdf</a></p>

## Appendix B: Building Effective Implementation Teams

Who on your team is part of planning and implementing new or enhanced practices? How well is your team working together to ensure that the planning and implementation of new practices are aligned with the ELOF? This planning tool can help ensure that you have the right people on your team to do this important work.

This planning tool is designed to help you develop active implementation teams and communication strategies. Implementation teams support the planning and implementation of important practices (e.g., related to curriculum, assessment, or school readiness goals). To use this tool, review and answer each question, and then, based on your responses, identify next steps that your team can take. This process will help to ensure that you have an effective team in place to support the planning and implementation of new or enhanced practices.

Guiding Questions for Building Your Team	Responses	Next Steps
1. Who should be part of your team? What roles, such as families, direct service staff, administrators, and disabilities coordinators, should you include on your team? What languages and cultural backgrounds should be represented? How will you ensure that a range of viewpoints is represented?		
2. Who understands the needs of your program and can serve on a team designed to support implementation of your new or enhanced practices? Identify 4–8 people.		
3. Does your team need more information to guide this work? What other help is needed to support implementation of new or enhanced practices?		
4. What existing meetings can be changed to focus on planning and implementing new or enhanced practices? Can implementation team members be included in these meetings?		
5. What are the best day(s) and time(s) for your implementation team to meet in person to discuss and develop action plans?		
6. What supports are needed so that all team members can attend meetings? Consider substitute teachers, schedule changes, and meeting spaces.		
7. What are the best methods of communication among members of the implementation team? How will the team share their progress with others?		



## Appendix B (cont'd)

Guiding Questions for Building Your Team	Responses	Next Steps
8. How can your team ensure that regular, ongoing communication about new or enhanced practices is a primary purpose of this team?		
9. What strategies will be used to gather feedback from families, direct service staff, and others on the implementation of new or enhanced practices? How will that feedback be used to guide continuous improvement?		
10. How will this team access ongoing and relevant data to inform next steps to improve the implementation of the new or enhanced practices?		

## Appendix C: Implementation Team Meeting Preparation Checklists—What Supports Do You Need?

You're developing a plan to implement a new or enhanced practice? Great! How can you ensure that you are covering all your bases so that the new practices you implement are successful?

Implementation teams can help identify needed supports and ensure that implementation happens as planned. These checklists will help your team communicate and plan collaboratively to successfully implement a new practice or approach (e.g., a new assessment instrument). The checklists will also help the team consider where support is needed from other levels in the early childhood system, such as regional Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) providers.

Before Each Meeting	
Activity	Done? (Y/N)
Determine where and when the meeting will take place.	
Identify a note taker and a facilitator.	
Use the Meeting Priority Table below to determine which pressing issues to discuss during your team meeting.	
Communicate to all team members the meeting details, agenda, and goal(s).	

### Meeting Priority Table

Prior to each meeting, review any implementation data and follow-up action items from the previous meeting to determine what topics should be discussed during the meeting. Use the questions in the table to help your implementation team identify priorities to discuss.

Infrastructure Building	Is this topic a priority for discussion? (Y/N)	What are the key points we need to discuss?	What do the data tell us about this topic?
Hiring Staff: How do we need to adjust staffing so that all direct service staff have time to reflect on, plan for, and implement the new practice(s)? Do we need to select (recruit, interview, and/or hire) additional staff?			
Training: Do we need to train staff in the ELOF sub-domain or in how to carry out the new practice(s) for all learners, including children who are DLLs and children with disabilities? If so, how will we train staff?			
Coaching: How will we provide ongoing coaching to staff to carry out the new practice(s)? Who internally will be responsible for this?			
Assessing Practice: How will we ensure that staff carry out the new practice(s) in the way that we intend?			

## Appendix C (cont'd)

Infrastructure Building	Is this topic a priority for discussion? (Y/N)	What are the key points we need to discuss?	What do the data tell us about this topic?
Using Data: What data and information will we collect about how the new practice(s) is being implemented? How will the data and information be used to guide continued improvement of the practice(s)?			
Leadership: How can program leaders communicate their support to staff as staff implement a new practice? What policies or procedures do we need to change or adapt?			
Early Childhood Partners: What support do we need from others in our community, including T/TA providers, to make the new practice(s) successful?			
Communication: What information do we need to communicate to other teams/partners? How frequently? In what format?			
Family Engagement: How will we ensure that program leaders and staff seek family input related to the new practice(s) and support the home-school connection in this area?			

# Appendix D: Alignment Tool for Assessment and the ELOF

## Background and Purpose

This alignment tool helps programs reflect on how a child assessment instrument measures children's development and learning in the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* (ELOF) domains. You can use this tool with an assessment instrument you currently use or with one you are considering using.

### What Does Alignment Mean?

In this tool, alignment means lining up items from your assessment instrument with the ELOF. This process allows you to see if your assessment instrument measures most or all of the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the ELOF.

### What Is the Difference between the ELOF and an Assessment Instrument?

The ELOF is a guide to understand children's development and learning. The ELOF:

- Describes developmental progressions in five domains
- Is not an assessment instrument or developmental checklist

Assessment instruments:

- Measure children's learning and development
- Target particular skills and behaviors

For example, assessment data may tell you about a particular child's numerical skills. You can use the ELOF to learn about the typical developmental progression that a child is likely to follow for number sense and quantity.

An assessment instrument might also address areas of children's development and learning, such as social studies or the arts, that are not found in the ELOF.

## Appendix D (cont'd)

### Dimensions of the Alignment Tool

Your review will focus on two dimensions:

**Breadth:** Breadth helps you consider how an assessment maps onto the domains and sub-domains of the ELOF.

**Depth:** Depth helps you consider how the assessment instrument measures developmental progressions.

### Recommended Steps for Aligning Your Assessment Instrument with the ELOF

1. Assemble the implementation team. The team should include staff who use the assessment instrument such as teachers, home visitors, and family child care providers. It should also include program leaders such as directors, managers (e.g. disabilities and health managers), and supervisors. Representatives of the policy council and other family leaders should also be included. This implementation guide provides more information on selecting an implementation team.
2. Gather your materials. These include the ELOF and assessment materials. Ensure that the implementation team is familiar with the ELOF and the assessment instrument. Read through the introduction to the ELOF and each domain's foreword. Discuss the assessment instrument's introduction and guidance to assessors. If the assessment instrument is new, learn about the instrument. Get to know its structure, principles, and goals.
3. Compare the assessment to each ELOF domain, one at a time.
  - Review one of the ELOF domains. Read through the sub-domains, progressions, and goals of that domain. The goals provide examples of the skills, behaviors, and concepts that the assessment should measure.
  - Review the assessment items in that domain. Assessment instruments might not have the same domains as the ELOF. The items may be organized in a different way or may have different names compared to the ELOF sub-domains. If so, be sure to look at other domains where skills or concepts might be shown.
  - Respond to the questions for each ELOF sub-domain. Work through the domain tables on the following pages. Reflect on the breadth and depth of the assessment in relation to the ELOF domain and sub-domains.
  - Repeat this process for each ELOF domain. You may choose to focus your review on the infant/toddler sub-domains, preschool sub-domains, or both.
4. Reflect on your alignment across all five domains. Identify any gaps you find in the assessment instrument when aligning it with the ELOF. Use the summary questions at the end of the tool to guide your thinking about next steps.
5. Repeat these steps for each child assessment instrument used in your program.

## Appendix D (cont'd)

Read the following vignette for an example of how one program's implementation team followed the recommended steps.

Robin is the education manager in a preschool program. Robin and the implementation team meet to align their preschool assessment instrument with the ELOF. Robin makes copies of the ELOF, the assessment instrument, and the user's guide for the instrument. The team reviews the ELOF and the assessment. They read through the ELOF introduction. They also review key elements of the assessment's user guide.

The team starts with the ELOF domain of Language and Literacy. They read through the domain description and review each of the sub-domains.

Then they turn to the assessment instrument. Robin asks the team to find examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts of Language and Communication. One teacher, Juliana, shares that items in the Expressive Language section of the assessment measure conversation skills, use of adequate detail in descriptions, and expression of needs and thoughts. She notices that these relate to the Communicating and Speaking sub-domain of the ELOF. Robin guides the discussion and starts to fill in the tool.

Robin then asks the team how the assessment items measure developmental progressions of children's language skills. A mental health consultant, Zehra, comments that each of the items is organized into a sequence of development. For example, an item labeled Receptive Language on the assessment ranges from a child understanding single words to showing understanding of complex phrases and explanations. Even though the term Receptive Language is not used in the ELOF, the assessment reflects the goals of the Attending and Understanding sub-domain of the ELOF. The team explores a few more of these examples in the Language and Communication domain.

After the team shares examples, Robin asks the team if the assessment covers most of the skills, behaviors, and concepts in the sub-domains. Overall, the team thinks that it does measure most of the sub-domains. However, they note that the assessment does not include any items for categorization of words, which is one of the goals of the Vocabulary sub-domain.

The team will repeat this process for each of the ELOF domains over the next few weeks.

# Appendix D (cont'd)

## Sample Table

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY		
● PRESCHOOL		
● Language and Communication		
Language development refers to emerging abilities in listening and understanding (receptive language) and in using language (expressive language).		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Attending and Understanding	<i>Items in Receptive Language assess children's understanding of and attention to communication.</i>	N/A
Communicating and Speaking	<i>Items in Expressive Language assess conversation skills, use of adequate detail in descriptions, and expression of needs and thoughts.</i>	N/A
Vocabulary	<i>Vocabulary use and understanding are assessed.</i>	<i>Categorization of words</i>
<p><b>Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children's skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?</b></p> <p><i>The items for Receptive Language measure most of the developmental progressions in the ELOF. For Vocabulary, the skills addressed measure the developmental progressions (but not all skills are covered). The assessment has one item on conversation skills. That item is about simple conversational exchanges, but doesn't get at later skills, such as multi-turn conversations or maintaining the focus of a conversation.</i></p>		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

APPROACHES TO LEARNING		
▲ INFANT/TODDLER		
▲ Approaches to Learning		
Approaches to Learning focuses on the skills and behaviors that children use to engage in learning.		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation		
Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)		
Initiative and Curiosity		
Creativity		
Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?		



# Appendix D (cont'd)

APPROACHES TO LEARNING		
● <b>PRESCHOOL</b>		
● <b>Approaches to Learning</b>		
<b>Approaches to Learning focuses on the skills and behaviors that children use to engage in learning.</b>		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation		
Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)		
Initiative and Curiosity		
Creativity		
<b>Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children's skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?</b>		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT		
▲ INFANT/TODDLER		
▲ Social and Emotional Development		
Social development refers to a child’s ability to create and sustain meaningful relationships. Emotional development refers to a child’s ability to express, recognize, and manage emotions.		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Relationships with Adults		
Relationships with Other Children		
Emotional Functioning		
Sense of Identity and Belonging		
Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT		
● <b>PRESCHOOL</b>		
● <b>Social and Emotional Development</b>		
<p><b>Social development refers to a child’s ability to create and sustain meaningful relationships. Emotional development refers to a child’s ability to express, recognize, and manage emotions.</b></p>		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Relationships with Adults		
Relationships with Other Children		
Emotional Functioning		
Sense of Identity and Belonging		
<p><b>Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?</b></p>		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY		
▲ INFANT/TODDLER		
▲ Language and Communication		
Language development refers to emerging abilities in listening and understanding (receptive language) and in using language (expressive language).		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Attending and Understanding		
Communicating and Speaking		
Vocabulary		
Emergent Literacy		
Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY		
● <b>PRESCHOOL</b>		
● <b>Language and Communication</b>		
Language development refers to emerging abilities in listening and understanding (receptive language) and in using language (expressive language).		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Attending and Understanding		
Communicating and Speaking		
Vocabulary		
Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY		
● <b>PRESCHOOL</b>		
● <b>Literacy</b>		
Emerging literacy refers to the knowledge and skills needed for reading and writing.		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Phonological Awareness		
Print and Alphabet Knowledge		
Comprehension and Text Structure		
Writing		
Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children's skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

COGNITION		
▲ INFANT/TODDLER		
▲ Cognition		
Cognitive development includes reasoning, memory, problem-solving, and thinking skills. These skills are the foundation young children use to understand and organize their world.		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Exploration and Discovery		
Memory		
Reasoning and Problem-Solving		
Emergent Mathematical Thinking		
Imitation and Symbolic Representation and Play		
Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

COGNITION		
● <b>PRESCHOOL</b>		
● <b>Mathematics Development</b>		
<p>Cognitive development includes reasoning, memory, problem-solving, and thinking skills. These skills are the foundation young children use to understand and organize their world. For preschoolers, this evolves into mathematical thinking and scientific reasoning.</p>		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Counting and Cardinality		
Operations and Algebraic Thinking		
Measurement		
Geometry and Spatial Sense		
<p><b>Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?</b></p>		



# Appendix D (cont'd)

COGNITION		
● <b>PRESCHOOL</b>		
● <b>Scientific Reasoning</b>		
<p>Cognitive development includes reasoning, memory, problem-solving, and thinking skills. These skills are the foundation young children use to understand and organize their world. For preschoolers, this evolves into mathematical thinking and scientific reasoning.</p>		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Scientific Inquiry		
Reasoning and Problem-Solving		
<p><b>Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?</b></p>		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT		
▲ INFANT/TODDLER		
▲ Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development		
Perception refers to how children use their senses to gather, understand, and respond to information. Motor skills include moving large and small muscles.		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Perception		
Gross Motor		
Fine Motor		
Health, Safety, and Nutrition		
Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?		

# Appendix D (cont'd)

PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT		
● PRESCHOOL		
● Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development		
Perception refers to how children use their senses to gather, understand, and respond to information. Motor skills include moving large and small muscles.		
Sub-Domains	What are some examples of how the assessment measures the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain?	What skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the goals of the sub-domain are not measured by the assessment?
Gross Motor		
Fine Motor		
Health, Safety, and Nutrition		
Do the assessment items measure the developmental progressions of children’s skills, behaviors, and concepts in this domain?		

## Appendix D (cont'd)

### Summary Questions and Next Steps

Think about everything you've written in the tables. Reflect on the assessment as a whole. Use the following questions to guide your thinking:

1. Which of the ELOF domains does the assessment instrument fully address?

---

---

2. Are there any ELOF domains or sub-domains that are not well addressed in the assessment instrument? If so, which ones?

---

---

3. Based on what you learned from this alignment process, identify any gaps between the assessment instrument and the ELOF.

---

---

Use the rest of this implementation guide to inform your decision-making, based on the results of the alignment.

### Sample Responses

#### Summary Questions and Next Steps

1. Which of the ELOF domains does the assessment instrument fully address?

*The assessment addresses three domains well: Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, and Language and Literacy.*

2. Are there any ELOF domains or sub-domains that are not well addressed in the assessment instrument? If so, which ones?

*The assessment does not fully address Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development or Mathematics Development.*

3. Based on what you learned from this alignment process, identify any gaps between the assessment instrument and the ELOF.

*Many of the skills, behaviors, and concepts from the following sub-domains were not measured:*

- *Health, Safety, and Nutrition*
- *Geometry and Spatial Sense*



# Appendix E: Developing Your Action Plan

## Program Supports: Guiding Questions

Use these questions as you support direct service staff’s use of a new child assessment instrument. If you are not replacing or supplementing an assessment, use the questions to support continuous improvement.

Communication: How will you share your work on the alignment with staff and families, including families who do not speak English? How will you communicate the importance of using an assessment instrument that is aligned with the ELOF? How will you communicate any changes in your program’s assessment instrument(s) to staff and families?

---

---

Professional Development: If you plan to supplement or replace your current assessment instrument with another instrument, what training will staff need? What training will they need in how the ELOF can support their understanding of assessment data?

- Will staff need training related to new or current assessment instruments to assess the development of children who are DLLs?
- Do you have qualified bilingual staff who can conduct the assessment in children’s home language(s)?
- Will staff need training in new or current assessment instruments as they complete assessments of children with disabilities?

---

---

Access to Materials and Equipment: If you are choosing a new or supplemental assessment instrument, what research will you need to do about the assessment instrument? How will you access the assessment and its materials? Will you have assessment materials in all the languages needed, and will you ensure there are qualified bilingual persons available to assess children?

---

---

Time: How much time will you need in order to research, purchase, and share a new assessment instrument? How will you schedule time for additional training?

---

---



# Appendix E (cont'd)

Program Supports: Action Plan					
Action Step	How?	Who?	What?	When?	Action Step Complete?
	How will you take action?	Who needs to be involved?	What resources do you need?	When is your target deadline?	How will you know your action step worked?
<b>Action Step 1</b>					
<b>Action Step 2</b>					
<b>Action Step 3</b>					
<b>Action Step 4</b>					





## Appendix F: Reflection Questions

As you implement your action steps, use the questions below to reflect on the process.

- How are you doing on your action steps?

---

---

- What's working? Why?

---

---

- What isn't working? How do you need to adjust?

---

---

- What do you notice about staff's efforts if using a new or supplemental assessment instrument?

---

---

- What challenges are staff facing if using a supplemental assessment instrument?

---

---

- What do you notice about staff's efforts to use the ELOF when reviewing assessment data?

---

---

- What additional action steps can you take to better support program staff?

---

---