



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool

Hexagon Discussion & Analysis Tool Instructions

Hexagon Discussion & Analysis Tool Instructions

The Hexagon Discussion and Analysis Tool can be used by Early Childhood Specialists and other technical assistance providers with grantees to better understand how a new or existing practice or practices could fit into the grantee's existing work. The Hexagon should be used alongside other resources, such as the Management Systems Wheel, the Curriculum Consumer's Report Tool, and the Dual Language Learners Program Assessment (DLLPA), to make decisions about what practice(s) to implement. The Hexagon can be used to discuss and score six categories:

PRACTICE INDICATORS

Practice categories are used to assess the strength of the new or existing practice that will be implemented. The three practice categories are:

Evidence

How strong is the evidence that this practice can improve outcomes for children and families?

Supports

What kinds of resources and support are available to the grantee as support for implementing the practice?

Usability

How well can the practice be used in a real world setting?

GRANTEE INDICATORS

Grantee indicators are used to assess how the new or existing practice would match the grantee's context. The three grantee categories are:

Need

What need in the community does the grantee want to address?

Fit

How well would this practice fit in the grantee's existing service(s) and community?

Capacity

What kind of capacity does the grantee have to implement this practice?

WHEN TO USE

The Hexagon Tool can be used at any stage of implementation to determine whether a practice fits well in the grantee's context. It is most commonly used during the Exploration stage when grantees are identifying possible new practices to implement.

HOW TO USE

PRIOR TO USING

1. Identify what practice or practices (up to three) will be assessed using the tool.
2. Identify the team who will complete the assessment. If the grantee has an Implementation Team, the Implementation Team can complete the assessment. The team should reflect diverse perspectives: team members may include grantee leaders and managers, education staff, parents and family members, and Board and Policy Council representatives.
3. Read the discussion questions prior to meeting to ensure that any necessary data and resources that will need to be reviewed during the assessment are available. The grantee may need to obtain additional information about the proposed practice from its developer to answer some of these questions. It may also be useful to have copies of the grantee's Community Assessment and 5 Year Goals for reference during the assessment.
4. If appropriate, the grantee may prioritize questions for deeper exploration based on the context and potential practice/s.

DURING USE

1. The team should review, discuss and document the questions for each category.
2. Extra space is included in each indicator for additional questions or notes.
3. After discussing the indicator, the team will rate the category using the 5-point Likert scale and indicators in each section.
4. Using the discussion notes and ratings, the team can make a recommendation about whether to adopt, replicate or stop the practice. While ratings should be taken into account during the recommendation process, ratings alone should not be used to determine final recommendations.

The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool

The Hexagon can be used as a planning tool to guide selection and evaluate potential practices for use.

GRANTEE INDICATORS

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT

- Staff meet minimum qualifications
- Able to sustain staffing, coaching, training, data systems, performance assessment, and administration
 - Financially
 - Structurally
 - Cultural responsiveness capacity
- Buy-in process operationalized
 - Practitioners
 - Families

FIT WITH CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Alignment with community, regional, state priorities
- Fit with family and community values, culture and history
- Impact on other interventions & initiatives
- Alignment with grantee's organizational structure

NEED

- Target population identified
- Disaggregated data indicating population needs
- Parent & community perceptions of need
- Addresses service or system gaps

PRACTICE INDICATORS

EVIDENCE

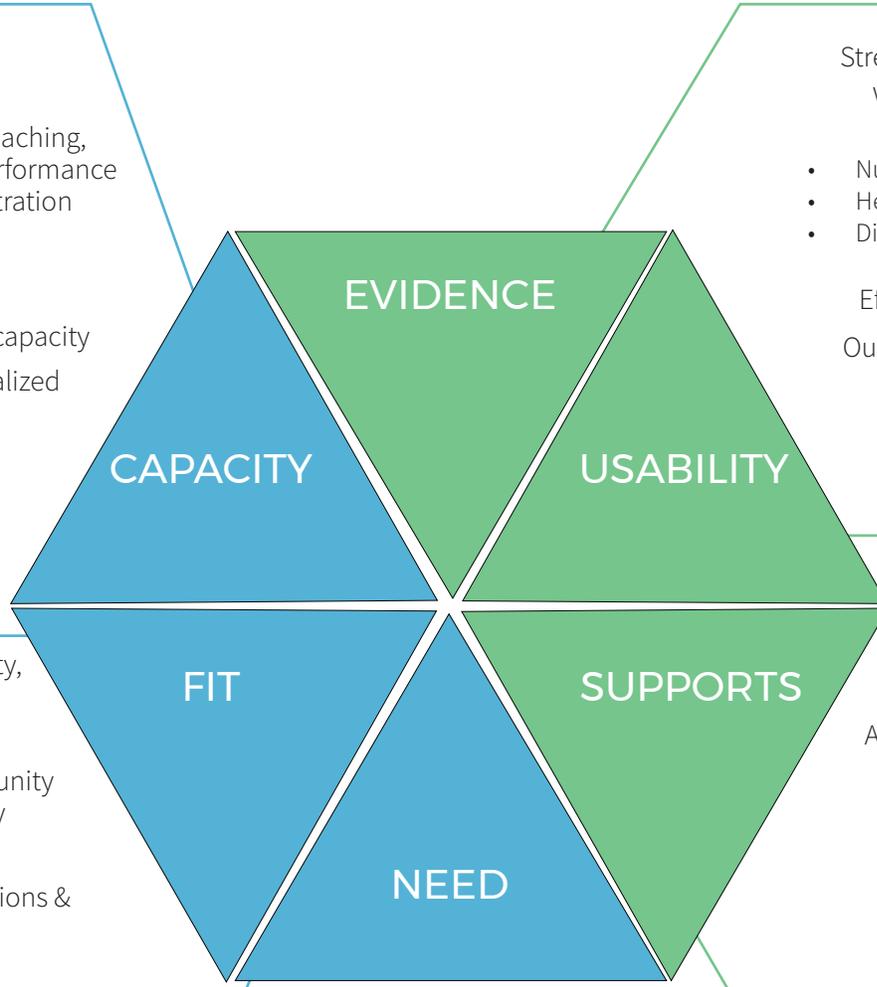
- Strength of evidence—for which children in what settings?
 - Number of studies
 - Head Start context
 - Diverse cultural groups
- Efficacy or effectiveness
- Outcomes – Is it worth it?

USABILITY

- Well-defined practice
- Successful grantees to observe
- Several replications
- Adaptations for context

SUPPORTS

- Expert Assistance
- Staffing
- Comprehensive professional development
- Data systems
- Technology supports (IT)
- Administration & system



Facilitator(s):

Today's Date:

Practice(s) Being Assessed:

Individuals Participating in the Assessment:

Identify the practice to be assessed. Write the numerical rating that best describe each component below.

		PRACTICE 1	PRACTICE 2	PRACTICE 3
PRACTICE	EVIDENCE	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	SUPPORTS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	USABILITY	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
GRANTEE	NEED	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	FIT	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	CAPACITY	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Practice Indicator EVIDENCE

1. Are research data available to demonstrate the effectiveness of the practice? (E.g., randomized trials, quasi-experimental designs). If yes, note citations or links to publications.
2. What is the strength of the evidence? In what context was the evidence developed?
3. If research data is not available, are there evaluation data to indicate effectiveness? (E.g., pre/post data, testing results). If yes, note citations or publications.
4. What outcomes are expected when the practice is implemented as intended?
5. Is there a theory of change or logic model that demonstrates how the practice is expected to contribute to short-term and long-term outcomes?
6. Has the practice been researched or evaluated in a Head Start setting? If yes, note citations or publications.
7. Does the research or evaluation data provide any information about the effectiveness of this practice for a variety of learners? (E.g., Dual Language Learners, children with disabilities or suspected delays). If yes, note citations or publications.
8. Does the research or evaluation data provide any information about the effectiveness of this practice for populations with cultural or linguistic characteristics similar to those served by the grantee? If yes, note citations or publications.
9. Is there evidence in any other context that this practice is effective? (E.g., evidence from another grantee or community using the practice). If yes, note citations or publications.

Rating for
EVIDENCE

Ratings

5 High Evidence

The practice has documented evidence of effectiveness based on rigorous research design and has been investigated using experimental design(s), single case design(s), or regression discontinuity design(s)

4 Evidence

The practice has demonstrated moderate effectiveness and has been investigated using quasi-experimental design(s) but causal relationships cannot be determined

3 Some Evidence

The practice shows minimal evidence of effectiveness and has been investigated using descriptive or correlational method(s) correlational method(s) (e.g., case studies, survey, naturalistic observation, etc.)

2 Minimal Evidence

The practice is guided by a well-developed theory of change or logic model, including clear inclusion and exclusion criteria for the target population, but has not demonstrated effectiveness through a research study

1 No Evidence

The practice does not have a well-developed logic model or theory of change and has not demonstrated effectiveness through a research study

Additional Questions/ Notes

Practice Indicator

USABILITY

1. Is the practice clearly defined? (E.g., what it is, who it is intended for?)
2. Are the core components of the practice identified?
3. Is each core component well operationalized? (E.g., staff know what to do and say, how to prepare, how to carry it out?)
4. Is there guidance on core components that can be modified or adapted to increase fit with the grantee's context?
5. Is there a fidelity assessment that measures staff behavior? (E.g., assessment of whether staff use the practice as intended). If yes, note how to access the fidelity assessment.
6. Has the practice been adapted for use within culturally and linguistically specific populations? Is there a recommended process for gathering community input into culturally specific enhancements?
7. What do we know about the key reasons for previous successful replications of this practice?
8. What do we know about the key reasons for previous unsuccessful replications of this practice?
9. Are there other grantees with successful histories of implementing the practice who are willing to be interviewed or observed?

Rating for
USABILITY

Ratings

5 Highly Usable

The practice has operationalized principles and values, core components that are measurable and observable, and a validated fidelity assessment; modifiable components are identified to support contextualization for new settings or populations

4 Usable

The practice has operationalized principles and values and core components that are measurable and observable but does not have a fidelity assessment; modifiable components are identified to support contextualization for new settings or populations

3 Somewhat Usable

The practice has operationalized principles and values and core components that are measurable and observable but does not have a fidelity assessment; modifiable components are not identified observable but does not have a fidelity assessment; modifiable components are not identified

2 Minimally Usable

The practice has identified principles and values and core components; however, the principles and core components are not defined in measurable or observable terms; modifiable components are not identified

1 Not Usable

The practice does not identify principles and values or core components

Additional Questions/Notes

Practice Indicator SUPPORTS

- 1.** Is there a qualified ‘expert’ who can help with implementation? (E.g., a consultant, TA provider). If yes, note names and organization.
- 2.** Are there start-up costs for implementation of the practice? (E.g., fees to the developer). If yes, itemize in notes section. What does the grantee receive for these costs?
- 3.** Are there on-going costs for implementation? (E.g., fees to the developer). If yes, itemize in notes section. What does the grantee receive for these costs?
- 4.** Are curricula and other resources related to the practice readily available? If so, note publisher or links. What is the cost of these materials?
- 5.** Is training and professional development related to the practice readily available? Is training culturally sensitive? Does it address issues of race equity, cultural responsiveness or implicit bias? What is the cost of professional development?
- 6.** Can the practice be used in the grantee’s coaching system of supports or does it require expert coaching from outside of the organization? Is it possible to train existing coaches for sustainability? If so, list coaching resources and cost in notes section.
- 7.** Are there sample job descriptions and interviews available for hiring or selecting staff to implement the practice? If so, identify resources and any associated costs.
- 8.** Is guidance on administrative policies and procedures available? If so, identify resources and any associated costs.
- 9.** Are there resources available to develop a data management plan for the practice, including a data system and monitoring tools? If so, identify resources and any associated costs.
- 10.** Is there a recommended orientation to facilitate ‘buy-in’ for staff, key stakeholders and partners? If so, identify resources and any associated costs.

Rating for
SUPPORTS

Ratings

5 Well Supported

Comprehensive resources are available from an expert (a program developer or intermediary) to support implementation, including resources for building the competency of staff (staff selection, training, coaching, fidelity) and organizational practice (data system and use support, policies and procedures, stakeholder and partner engagement.)

4 Supported

Some resources are available to support implementation, such as resources to support staff competency but not organizational practice

3 Somewhat Supported

Limited resources are available, such as a curriculum available for purchase

2 Minimally Supported

General guidance provided but no specific resources, such as a suggestion to use strengths based approaches with staff

1 Not Supported

Few to no resources to support implementation

Additional Questions/ Notes

Grantee Indicator NEED

1. Who is the identified population of concern?
2. What is/are the identified needs of this population?
3. Was an analysis of data conducted to identify specific area(s) of need relevant to the practice?
If yes, was this data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, language or other characteristics specific to the population the grantee plans to serve?
4. How does the Community and Self-Assessment inform the need?
5. Were family and community members (e.g., Policy Council, Parents Committees) engaged in identifying this need? How do families and other community members perceive this need? What do they believe will be helpful? How were community members engaged to assess their perception of need?
6. Is there evidence that the practice addresses the specific area/s of need identified?
For the age/s of interest? For the needs of all children?
If yes, note how this evidence was developed.
7. If the practice is implemented, what can potentially change for this population?

Rating for
NEED

Ratings

5 Strongly Meets Need

The practice has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through rigorous research (e.g., experimental design) with comparable population; disaggregated data has been analyzed to demonstrate program or practice meets need of specific subpopulations

4 Meets Need

The practice has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through rigorous research (e.g., experimental design) with comparable population; disaggregated data has not been analyzed for specific subpopulation

3 Somewhat Meets Need

The practice has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through less rigorous research design (e.g., quasi-experimental, pre-post) with comparable population; disaggregated data has not been analyzed for specific subpopulation

2 Minimally Meets Need

The practice has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through practice experience; disaggregated data has not been analyzed for specific subpopulation

1 Does Not Meet Need

The practice has not demonstrated meeting need for identified population

Additional Questions/ Notes

Grantee Indicator

FIT

1. How does the practice fit with the grantee's priorities?
2. How will this practice address goals identified during the grantee's annual planning process?
3. How does the practice fit with the region and OHS priorities?
4. How does the practice fit with family and community values and priorities in the community where the grantee operates? How does this fit with family and community values and priorities of culturally and linguistically specific populations?
5. How does the practice fit with the community's history?
6. What other initiatives or practices currently being implemented will intersect with the practice?
7. How will the practice fit with the other existing initiatives or practices?
8. Will the other initiatives make it easier or more difficult to implement the proposed practice and/or achieve the desired outcomes?

Rating for
FIT

Ratings

5 Strong Fit

The practice fits with the grantee's priorities, families' and community values, including the values of culturally and linguistically specific populations, and other existing initiatives

4 Fit

The practice fits with the grantee's priorities and families' and community values; however, the values of culturally and linguistically specific population have not been assessed for fit

3 Somewhat Fit

The practice fits with the grantee's priorities of the implementing site, but it is unclear whether it aligns with families' and community values and other existing initiatives

2 Minimal Fit

The practice fits with some of the grantee's priorities, but it is unclear whether it aligns with families' and community values and other existing initiatives

1 Does Not Fit

The practice does not fit with the grantee's priorities of the implementing site or families' and community values

Additional Questions/ Notes

Grantee Indicator

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT

1. Typically, how much does it cost to implement the practice each year? Are there resources to fund this? If the current budget cannot support this cost, outline a resource development strategy.
2. What are the staffing requirements for this practice? (Number and type of staff, credentials, qualifications).
Does the grantee currently employ or have access to staff to meet these requirements?
If yes, do the staff have a cultural and linguistic match with the population they serve, as well as relationships in the community?
3. What administrative policies or procedures must be developed or adapted for this practice to succeed?
4. Is the governing body and Policy Council knowledgeable about and supportive of the practice? Do leaders have diverse skills and perspectives representative of the community being served?
5. Do grantee staff have the capacity to collect and use data to inform ongoing monitoring and improvement of the practice?
6. Will the grantee's communication strategies facilitate effective internal and external communication with stakeholders, including impacted families and the community, about the practice?
7. Does the practice require use of or changes to the physical plant? (Facilities and learning environment. If so, identify resources and any associated costs.
8. Does the practice require use of or changes to the transportation system? If so, identify resources and any associated costs.
9. Does the practice require new technology? (E.g., hardware or software, such as a data system.)
If so, identify resources and any associated costs.
10. Does the practice require use of or change to the recordkeeping and reporting system?
If so, identify resources and any associated costs.

Rating for
CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT**Ratings****5 Strong Capacity**

Grantee adopting this practice has a qualified workforce and all of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the practice with integrity

4 Adequate Capacity

Grantee adopting this practice has a qualified workforce and most of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the practice with integrity

3 Some Capacity

Grantee adopting this practice has a qualified workforce and some of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the practice with integrity

2 Minimal Capacity

Grantee adopting this practice has a qualified workforce and only a few of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the practice with integrity

1 No Capacity

Grantee adopting this practice does not have a qualified workforce or any of the financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the practice with integrity

Additional Questions/ Notes

This document was originally developed by NIRN - University of Carolina at Chapel Hill and modified 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, by the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.

Metz, A. & Louison, L. (2018) The Hexagon Tool: Exploring Context. Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Based on Kiser, Zabel, Zachik, & Smith (2007) and Blase, Kiser & Van Dyke (2013).