

Head Start State Collaboration Office Needs Assessment

*State of Washington
2009-2010 Survey Results*



September 2010

Introduction

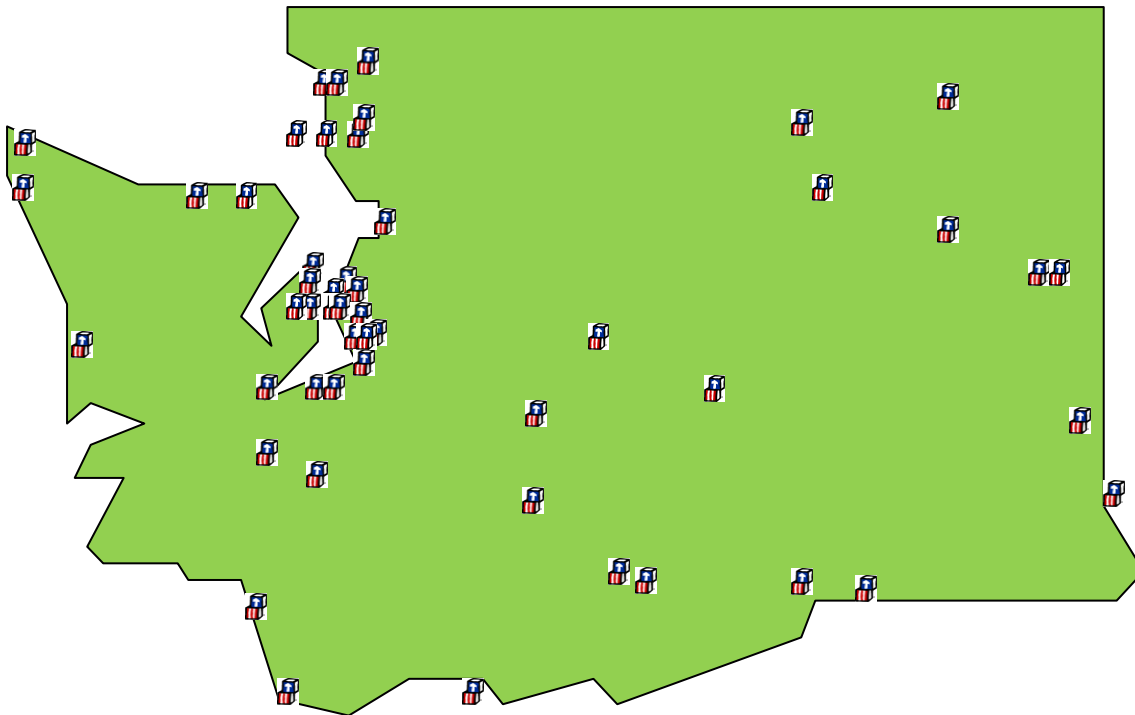
Head Start is a national program that provides comprehensive child development services to help children from low-income families become ready for school. Eligible children ages birth to 5 and pregnant women and their families receive assistance and information in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental, and mental health; disabilities; nutrition; and parent involvement.

The federal Office of Head Start in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) provides funding for grants to local public agencies, private organizations, Indian tribes, and school systems. These organizations, in turn, operate Head Start programs.

Head Start in Washington State

In Washington, there are four different Head Start program options that meet the diverse needs of children and families in our state: Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start. The programs are geographically located throughout the state, in both rural and urban settings.

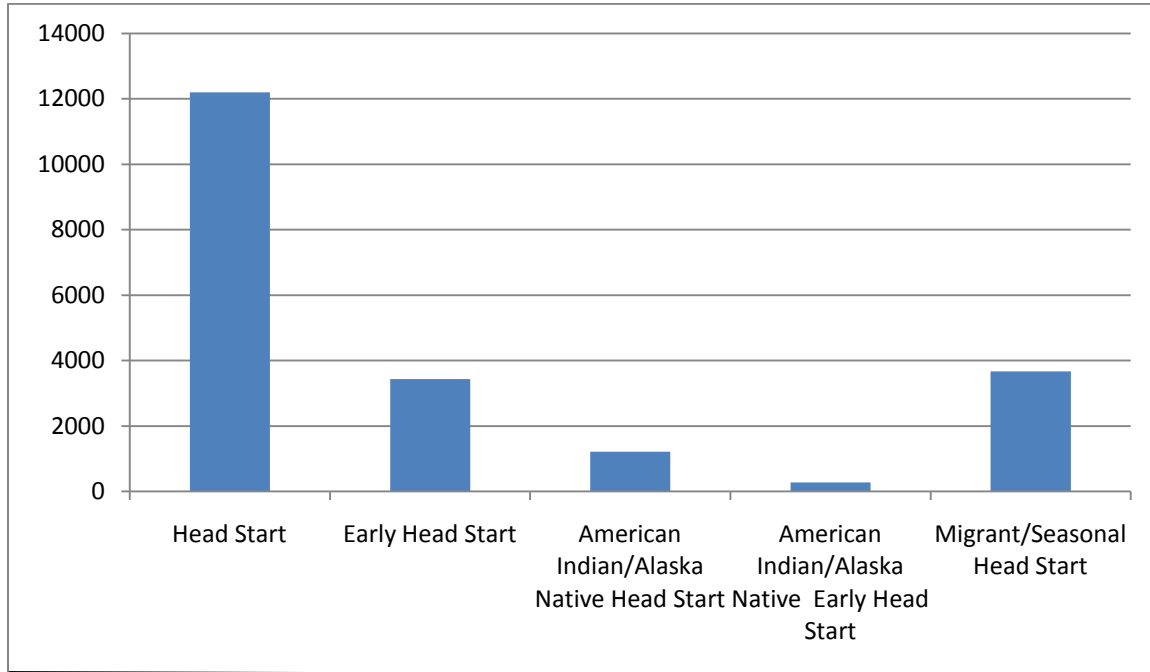
Figure 1. Locations of Washington Head Start Programs



In the 2008/2009 year a total of 20,791 children and families were served through a total of 49 Head Start programs many of which provide more than one type of Head Start service. Of these 49 there were; 30 programs providing Head Start, 22 programs providing Early Head Start, 17 programs providing

American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start, 6 programs providing American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start, and 2 programs providing Migrant/Seasonal Head Start in Washington.

Figure 2. Children/Families Served by Program Type



Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO)

The HSSCO in Washington is the main point of contact for Head Start at the State level. It is housed within the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL). The HSSCO was established to serve as a state-level support mechanism for the various efforts of Head Start programs to provide quality, comprehensive services to children, families, and their communities. Specifically, the HSSCO is charged with the following three federally-mandated goal areas in its efforts to provide state-level support to programs and all low-income children and families:

- Help build early childhood systems and enhance access to comprehensive services and support for Head Start programs and all low-income children and families;
- Encourage widespread collaboration between Head Start and other appropriate programs, services, and initiatives, augmenting Head Start's capacity to be a partner in State initiatives on behalf of children and their families; and
- Facilitate the involvement of Head Start in state policies, plans, processes and decisions affecting Head Start target populations and other low-income families.

In addition, the HSSCO must focus its efforts on nine (9) HSSCO priority areas that include: Health Services; Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness; Family/Child Assistance; Child Care; Family Literacy; Children with Disabilities; Community Services; Education (Publicly-funded Pre-K Partnership Development and Head Start Transition and Alignment with K-12); and Professional Development.

Needs Assessment Survey

The Head Start Act of 2007 requires that each HSSCO conduct a statewide needs assessment of Head Start programs. The results of the assessment in each state are intended to inform the development of a 5-year strategic plan for the HSSCO which must be updated annually.

Survey Objectives

Last year the, HSSCO conducted its first statewide needs assessment which included in-depth sections for each of the nine priority areas. We used the results to develop the current HSSCO 5-year strategic plan which is structured around the following goal areas:

Goal #1: Increase the availability of appropriate and coordinated health services for children and families

Goal #2: Improve the ability of families to obtain quality early learning programs and services that meet their needs

Goal #3: Improve/increase opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to be involved in state-level activities, initiatives and programs that enhance services to children and families

Goal #4: Contribute to the development of a coordinated, statewide comprehensive professional development system for all early learning professionals in Washington State

Goal #5: Improve the governance, functional operations and perceptions of the HSSCO to be a transparent and inclusive leader in supporting policies and initiatives that further advance services to children and families

The HSSCO decided, in cooperation with the HSSCO/ECEAP Advisory Team, to conduct a more abbreviated update survey this year. The update was based upon the existing 5-year strategic plan as well as the Washington State Early Learning Plan recently adopted by the Department of Early Learning, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Thrive by Five Washington to guide early learning systems efforts in Washington over the next 10 years. The purpose of this update was to assess the current needs of Washington Head Start programs with regard to the five goals above and to gain program input regarding HSSCO priorities for the coming year.

A separate survey was released to partner organizations within the larger early learning community including educational institutions, state agencies, and non-profits. This survey served to solicit broad stakeholder feedback about the performance and capacity of the HSSCO as a strategic partner.

Survey Design

The survey was released in Survey Monkey format in September of 2010. Head Start program directors were each sent a web address for the survey and encouraged to include relevant staff members in its completion. Participation in the survey process was voluntary.

The survey had five sections, one for each of the goal areas in the HSSCO five-year strategic plan. Within each of these sections there were several questions based upon the strategies identified in the 5-year plan, these questions were designed to assess the current level of need in each of these areas. At the end of each section there was a question asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they believe related Early Learning Plan strategies ought to be a priority for the HSSCO in the next year. The full survey is included as appendix A.

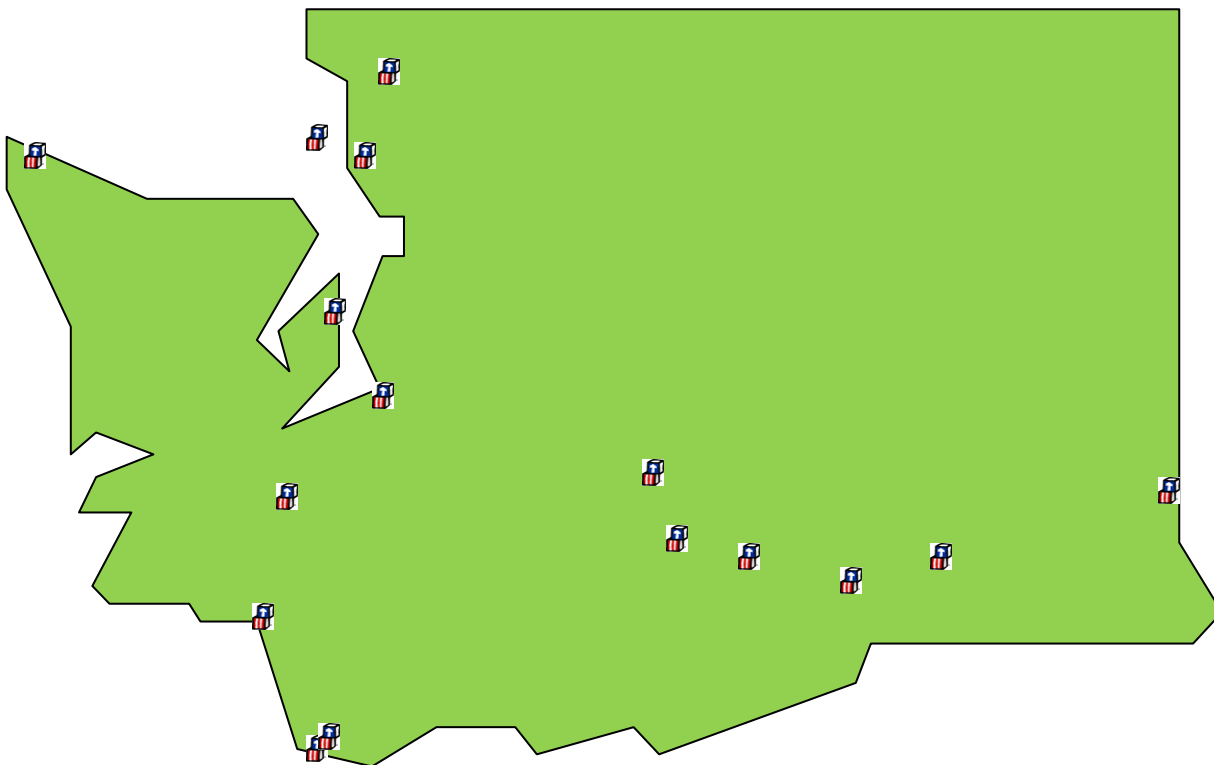
Response rate

The survey was released to all Washington programs, including Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start on September 2, 2010. Programs had until September 13th to complete the survey. The HSSCO in DEL granted an extension through September 17th to programs who did not respond by the 13th and sent multiple reminders. In total, we received 16 completed surveys out of the total 49 eligible programs. We cannot assume that results are necessarily representative of the needs of all Washington Head Start programs. The charts below show responses by program type and geographical location.

Figure 3. Response Rate by Program Type

Program Type	Percentage Responded
Head Start	40%
Early Head Start	41%
Migrant/Seasonal Head Start	100%
American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start	18%
American Indian/Alaska Native Early Head Start	17%

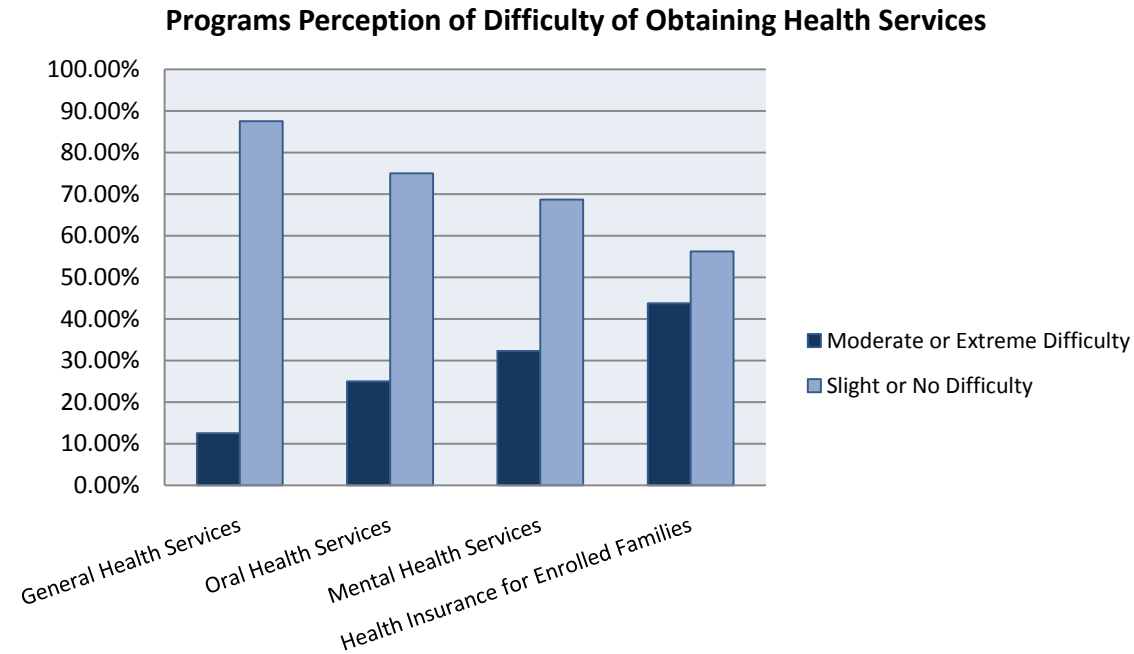
Figure 4. Respondent Locations



Head Start Survey Results

Below are highlights from the survey results, organized by subject area. Full survey results can be viewed in Appendix B at the end of this report.

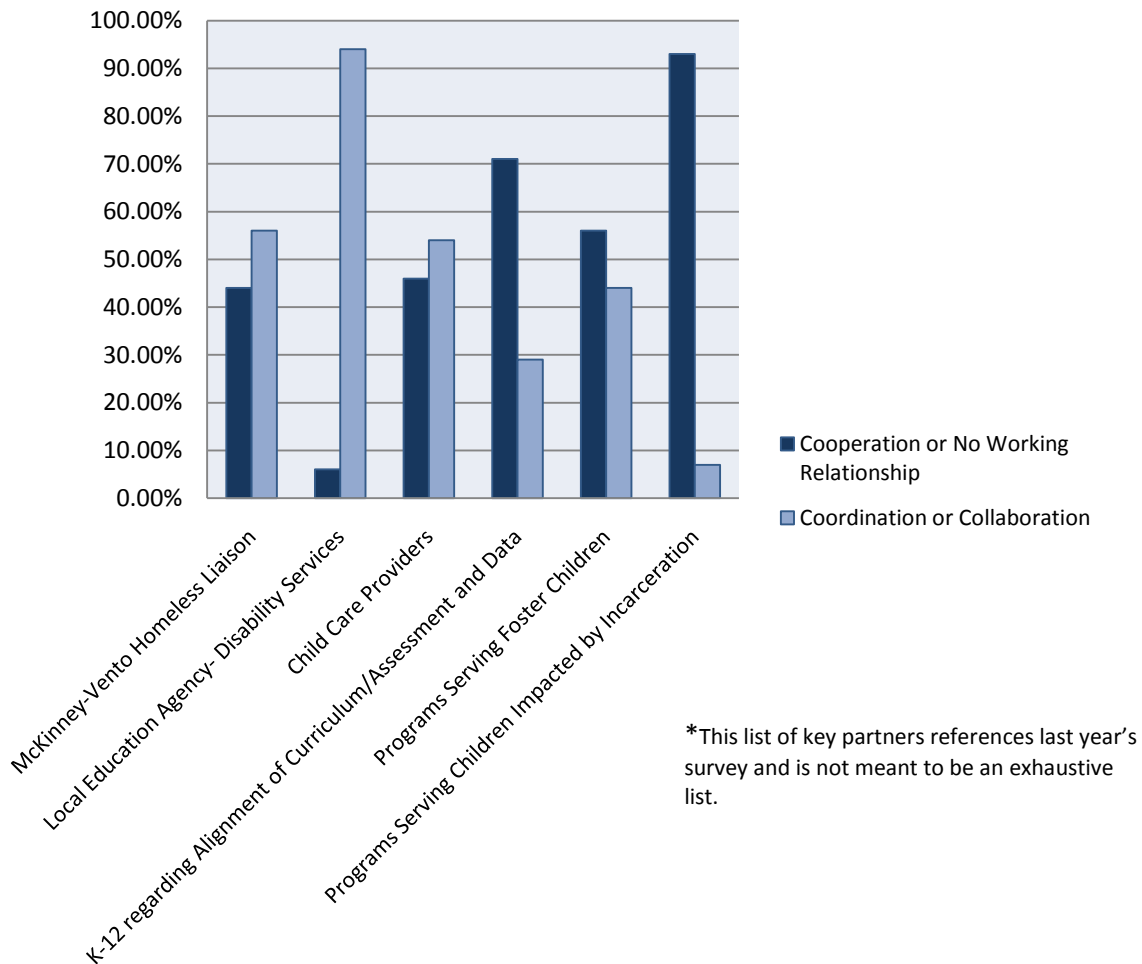
Goal #1: Increase the availability of appropriate and coordinated health services for children and families.



Responses indicate significant differences in the degree of difficulty obtaining different types of health services. Respondents reported a high degree of confidence in the ability to obtain general health services but progressively less so for oral health, mental health and insurance. Narrative responses cite a variety of reasons for difficulty obtaining health services which applied across the types of health services; distance/transportation, lack of local providers (particularly for mental health services), and parent capacity/commitment to maintaining appointments. With regards to health insurance, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that obtaining services for children is relatively feasible but obtaining services for parents is extremely difficult.

Goal #2: Improve the ability of families to obtain quality early learning programs and services that meet their needs.

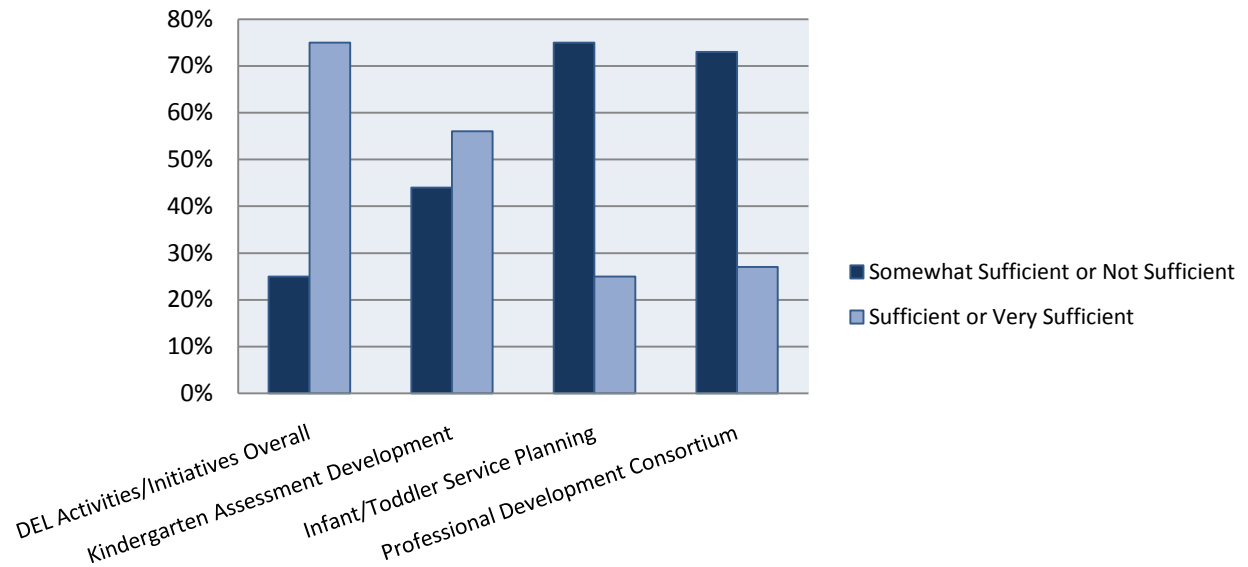
Program Relationships with Key Partners*



Responses indicate that there is significant variation both among programs regarding the level of partnership in each of the areas listed as well as across areas. The data suggests the need for increased relationship development related to most of the areas listed but in particular; K-12, programs serving foster children and programs serving children impacted by incarceration. Narrative responses reflected not only difficulty partnering with child care but also challenges to families obtaining affordable child care. Issues surrounding child care partnerships are likely to increase as the state's budget situation leads to increased reductions in child care subsidy.

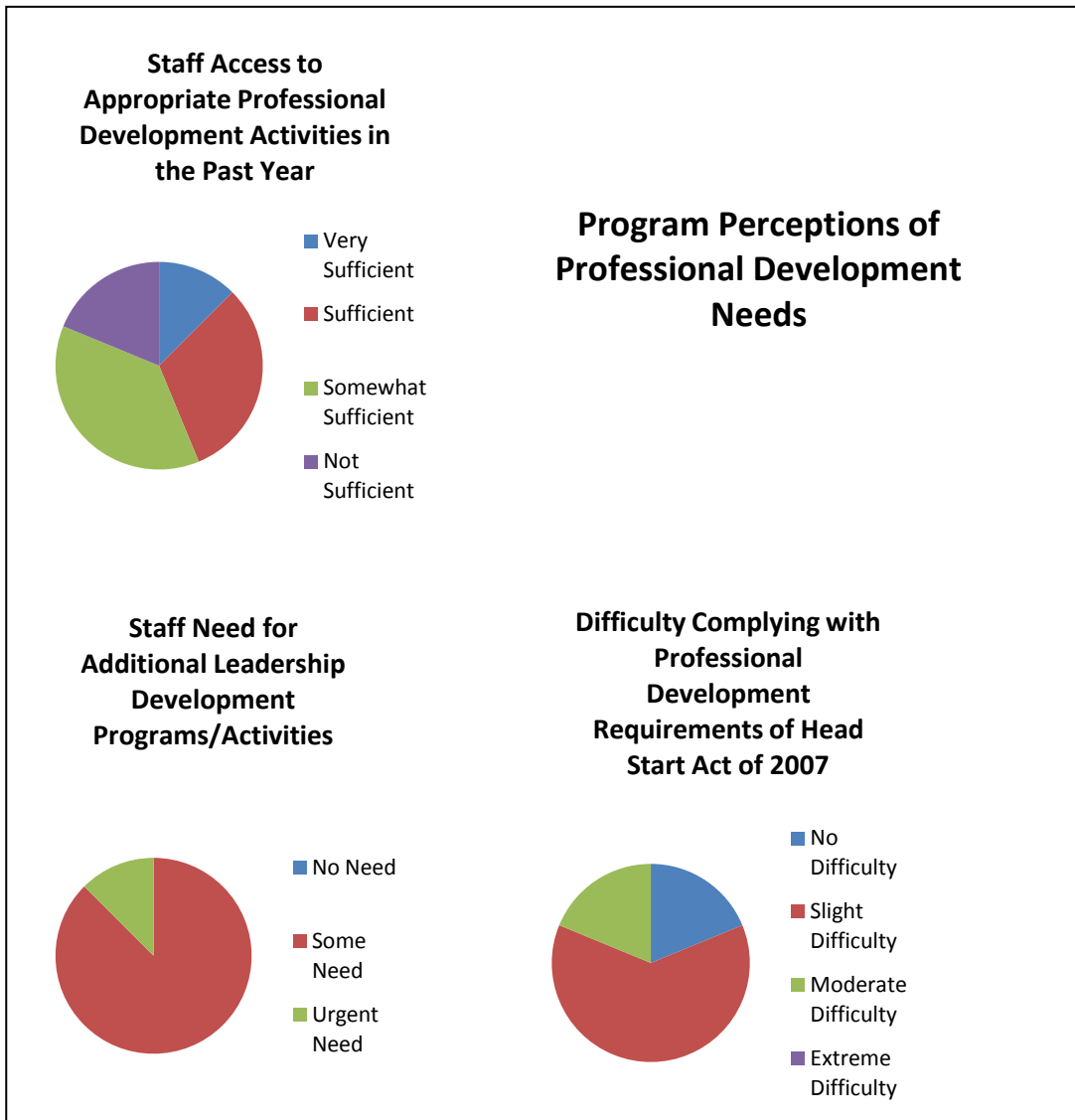
Goal #3: Improve/increase opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to be involved in state-level activities, initiatives and programs that enhance services to children and families

Program Perceptions of Opportunities for Involvement in State-Level Activities, Initiatives and Programs



Responses suggest a relatively high level of satisfaction with opportunities for involvement with DEL activities and initiatives overall but the perception shifts significantly when applied to specific activities; particularly infant/toddler service planning and the Professional Development Consortium. This suggests that respondents may be experiencing difficulty finding opportunities to connect to specific state level projects, indicating a need to improve information about access points for participation and how these projects relate to the work of Head Start programs.

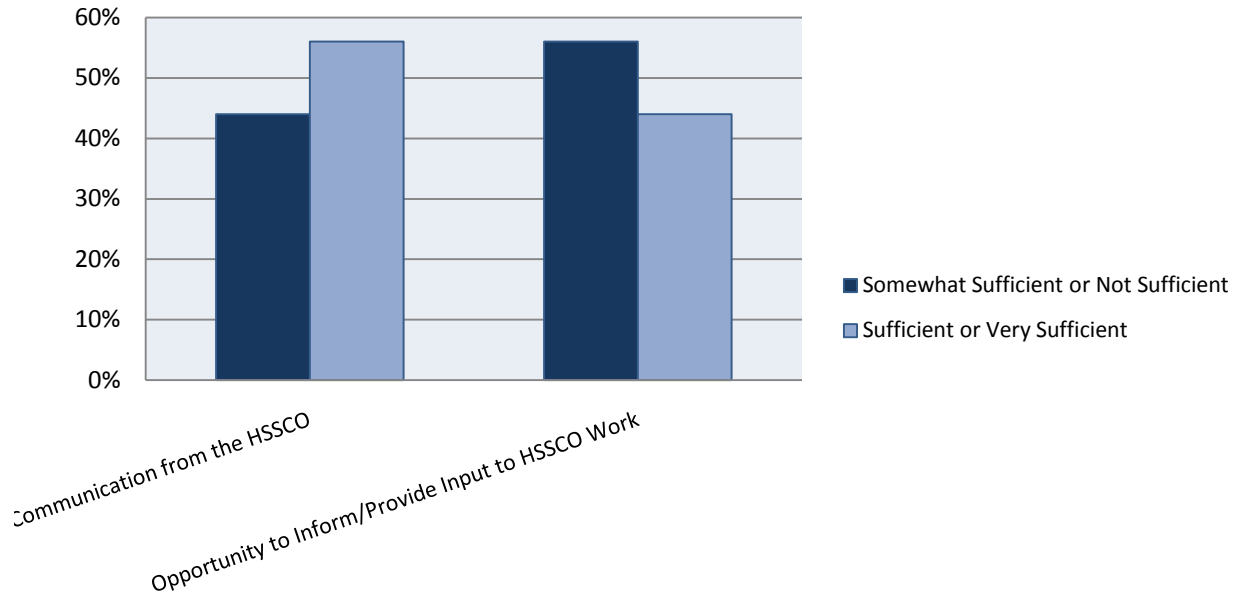
Goal #4: Contribute to the development of a coordinated, statewide comprehensive professional development system for all early learning professionals in Washington State



Responses indicate a relatively high need for access to additional professional development activities and leadership development opportunities among respondents. Respondents indicated varying amounts of difficulty complying with the professional development requirements of the Head Start Act. Responses regarding leadership development opportunities suggest the need for opportunities to replace those previously provided through the Collaborative Leadership Institute, although it should be noted that these responses may reflect that lack of responses from larger urban programs that possess greater professional development resources. Narrative responses regarding this difficulty focused on lack of appropriate higher education opportunities, articulation, financial assistance, and staff buy-in.

Goal #5: Improve the governance, functional operations and perceptions of the HSSCO to be a transparent and inclusive leader in supporting policies and initiatives that further advance services to children and families.

Program Perceptions of Relationship to HSSCO



Results indicate that a relatively high number of respondents consider both communication from the HSSCO and opportunities to inform the work of the HSSCO to be insufficient or only somewhat sufficient. This suggests that improved communication mechanisms need to be developed for the HSSCO such as a regular newsletter. The work of the newly formed HSSCO/ECEAP Advisory Team will also serve to mitigate these issues.

Early Learning Plan Strategies

Each section of the survey included a list of Early Learning Plan strategies related to that goal area and asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they believe each ought to be a priority for the HSSCO in the coming year. The responses are compiled below.

ELP Strategy Priorities for the HSSCO as Reported by Programs

ELP Strategy	Not an HSSCO Priority This Year	Minimal HSSCO Priority	Moderate HSSCO Priority	Top HSSCO Priority
Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood	6.3 %	12.5 %	25 %	56.3 %
Insurance/Medical Home	0 %	13.3 %	60 %	26.7 %
Early Childhood Oral Health	0 %	18.8 %	37.5 %	43.8 %
Developmental Screening	0 %	50 %	31.3 %	18.8 %
Access to Mental Health Services	6.3 %	12.5 %	18.8 %	62.5 %
Access to Treatment for Postpartum Mood Disorder	0 %	18.8 %	56.3 %	25 %
Services to Infants/Toddlers	6.3 %	6.3 %	25 %	62.5 %
Home Visiting	6.3 %	18.8 %	43.8 %	31.3 %
Early Literacy	6.3 %	18.8 %	31.3 %	43.8 %
Early Numeracy	6.7 %	20 %	33.3 %	40 %
Enhanced ECEAP	6.3 %	0 %	37.5 %	56.3 %
Voluntary Universal Pre-K	12.5 %	18.8 %	31.3 %	37.5 %
Access to Information and Resources	6.3 %	37.5 %	37.5 %	18.8 %
Strong Families	6.7 %	20 %	40 %	33.3 %
Pre-K and K-3 Alignment	0 %	6.3 %	31.3 %	62.5 %
Full Day Kindergarten	18.8 %	31.3 %	31.3 %	18.8 %
Child Care Subsidies	6.3 %	18.8 %	18.8 %	56.3 %
Public Awareness/Commitment	6.3 %	12.5 %	31.3 %	50 %
P-20 Longitudinal Data System	6.3 %	25 %	37.5 %	31.3 %
Child Care Licensing	0 %	37.5 %	25 %	37.5 %
Professional Development and Compensation	0 %	12.5 %	31.3 %	56.3 %
Quality Rating and Improvement System	12.5 %	18.8 %	31.3 %	37.5 %
Early Learning and Development Benchmarks	6.3 5%	0 %	43.8 %	50 %
Registry	20 %	13.3 %	53.3 %	13.3 %

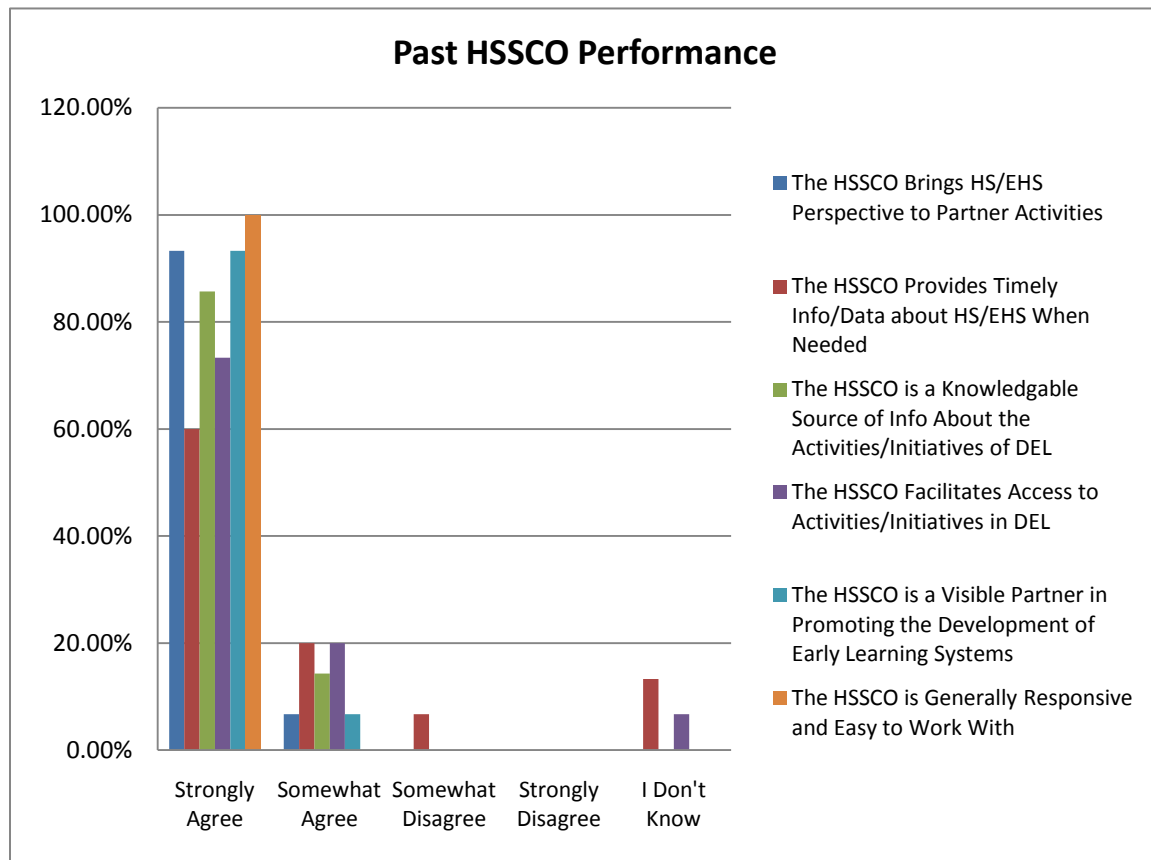
* Strategies rated as a top priority for 50% or more of respondents are highlighted in grey

Respondents generally indicated a high degree of priority for the ELP strategies listed which highlights the broad range of potential HSSCO priorities at any given time. The strategies that received the highest number of responses indicating that they ought to be a top HSSCO priority in the coming year were; nutrition in pregnancy and early childhood, access to mental health services, services to infants and toddlers, enhanced ECEAP, Pre-K and K-3 alignment, child care subsidies, public awareness and commitment, professional development and compensation, and early learning and development benchmarks.

Partner Survey Results

The survey sent to HSSCO strategic partners was grouped into two areas: assessment of past HSSCO performance and recommendations for the future work of the HSSCO.

The chart below displays responses to questions regarding past performances:



Responses indicate a generally high level of partner satisfaction with HSSCO performance. Responses were slightly less positive with regard to the timely provision of information/data and facilitating access to the activities/initiatives of the Department of Early Learning, indicating that these are areas to keep in mind in the future.

Questions regarding the future work of the HSSCO were all structured for open ended response. The questions included;

- Do you have any recommendations for how the HSSCO could improve our capacity to act as an effective collaborative partner in the future?
- What do you believe are the barriers to the HSSCO acting as an effective, collaborative partner? What, if any, suggestions do you have for addressing these barriers?
- Please list any upcoming or current projects, initiatives, or activities for which you believe HSSCO partnership is particularly important.
- Is there anything else that you would like to share with us as we plan the future work of the HSSCO?

Below are highlights from the narrative responses:

- Suggestions to maintain or increase involvement in the work of the Early Learning Plan, the Build Initiative, the Professional Development Consortium, Strengthening Families Washington, P-3 alignment activities, the Universal Developmental Screening project, Washington Association of Head Start and ECEAP activities, the SB 6759/HB 2731 workgroups, and the State Advisory Council.
- Perceived barriers include; conflicting state/federal priorities, capacity, maintaining distinct HSSCO role within the Department of Early Learning, and finding effective communication mechanisms.
- Suggestions to increase visibility, communication, and transparency.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Responses to this year's surveys indicate that the five goal areas identified last year remain relevant to Head Start programs in Washington. The responses provide clarification and guidance about where the HSSCO should focus our efforts in the coming year. The next step will be the development of the Washington HSSCO's next five year grant application, due in December of 2010. This application will include an updated work plan for the work of the HSSCO over the next five years.