Environmental Scan Guidance

Scanning the environment
Analyzing the data
Identifying community assets and opportunities

Overview

The environmental scanning process includes three steps: (1) developing an approach to the scanning process, (2) scanning the environment and (3) analyzing the data collected to identify your community's population of focus.

Participation by a range of stakeholders throughout the scanning process will enrich the Environmental Scan by ensuring it is representative of the broad early childhood system. Inclusion of cross-sector stakeholders in the scanning process will help communities effectively identify gaps in existing services, find opportunities to partner with local- and state-level programs, build support from various partners for the project as a whole and begin conversations among stakeholders regarding long-term sustainability of LAUNCH Together.

In addition to mapping out the systems and programs in place, the Environmental Scan also should include a financial map of the funding streams that support programs to address the physical, emotional, social, cognitive and behavioral health of children prenatal to age eight.

The Environmental Scan process can also be used by communities to assess their existing policies and procedures related to behavioral health disparities. For example, do other key agencies maintain specific strategies to reduce behavioral health disparities among the subpopulations they serve? This process will help communities identify any gaps in such strategies and documented policies and eventually develop an approach (or revise an existing one) through the strategic planning process.

The Environmental Scan provides an opportunity for communities to communicate with other important stakeholders in the region or community. Local communities' findings may help inform policy and decision making at the state level and help inform local communities about ways in which their gaps in service, needs, resources and practices compare with those in other communities.

Developing a Methodology

Even though the Environmental Scan process is about collecting data, it is an opportunity for communities to dialogue with stakeholders, establish and strengthen partnerships and inform the community about LAUNCH Together. Each step in the process should be conducted in a collaborative manner involving a range of stakeholders. Communities should actively engage their LAUNCH Together Planning Committee and stakeholders relevant to the planning process in scanning activities, as well as using the scanning process as an opportunity to form alliances with a wide variety of individuals in the community. Soliciting input from a range of stakeholders, including current and potential program participants, will help ensure that services are responsive to the needs of the community and will build support for the initiative as a whole.

There are a variety of ways communities can gather data for the Environmental Scan, including the following:

- Adapt and/or update existing environmental scans or needs assessments
- Distribute blank (or pre-populated) templates to key organizations or agencies to provide or confirm the scan data
- Conduct interviews, focus groups or surveys to gather feedback from the community, including parents and caregivers, providers and key stakeholders

The LAUNCH Together Technical Assistance Experts can provide individualized assistance to communities to help develop a methodology for the scan. To request Technical Assistance, contact the LAUNCH Together Technical Assistance and Policy Manager, Molly Yost, at myost@earlymilestones.org.

Communities are provided up to two pages to describe methods for gathering data and completing the scan on the Environmental Scan template.

Completing the Scan Tables

The scan is organized according to the five LAUNCH prevention and health promotion strategies:

1. Integration of Behavioral Health into Primary Care
2. Mental Health Consultation in Early Care and Education
3. Enhanced Home Visitation
4. Family Strengthening
5. Screening and Assessment

The guiding questions by topic area, located with the blank template, are intended as "food for thought." They can be used as a starting point for discussion, as items to include in focus group or interview questions or as a framework to conduct the scan or analyze the data collected.

In addition, communities should broaden the Environmental Scan to include state-level factors that are, or will be, relevant at the local level. This step is important in identifying state policy or systems issues that will affect the development of the local LAUNCH Together program. These guiding questions are offered to trigger thinking about all of the possible systems, programs and other resource that communities might include in the Environmental Scan. Communities are not required to answer all of the guiding questions.

Similarly, templates are provided for communities to record the information they gather through the Environmental Scan. The templates are structured to collect information on the following:

- **Services provided:** A brief description of the services offered.
- **Organization providing the services and length of time in community:** The name of the organization or agency that is delivering the service and the number of years the organization has been delivering services in the community.
- **Population served:** General information about the population served, including age range, population characteristics and risk factors.
- **Geographic reach:** The geographic reach of the services.
- **Goals and outcomes:** The intended goals and outcomes of the services.
- **Funding amount and source:** Approximate funding amounts are appropriate from both public and private sources related the direct service being provided. We recognize that it may be challenging to obtain exact funding amounts from various agencies, thus estimates are fine. Please include description of blending/braiding of funding sources to provide services.
- **Data system:** The type of data collected and how it is stored.
- **Demand:** The number of children or families on wait lists (if applicable) and the eligible population not being served by a particular service.

A sample table related to *Screening and Assessment* can be found on the following page.

SAMPLE: Screening and Assessment

Service provided	Organization providing service *(include length of time in community)*	Population served *(age range and/or population characteristics)*	Geographic reach	Goals and outcomes	Funding amount and source	Data system *(type of data collected and how stored)*	Demand *(number of children on wait lists and eligible population not served)*
Maternal depression screening	Home visitation program (10 years)	Low-income mothers (200% FPL) with children birth to age three	Smith County	Increased school readiness; increased intervals between births; improved prenatal health; increased maternal employment	$20,000 from Medicaid; $10,000 from private foundation	School readiness measures; household income; instances of child abuse and neglect, etc.; data housed at Smith County Home Visitation Intermediary	34 families eligible but not served
Developmental screening	ABC community health center (25 years)	Children birth to age 5 and their families	Franklin City	Increased health and wellness for young children; 150 children screened in 2014 using the ASQ-3	$10,000 from United Way	Integrated electronic screening results into electronic medical record	Unknown

Following each table are text boxes to provide information regarding other factors impacting services (e.g. other partnerships and collaborative efforts; workforce capacity and knowledge; and gaps, barriers or duplications in services). Please use this opportunity to include relevant details about community-based services *and systems development efforts.* Capturing these systems-level factors will inform your Strategic Plan. Below are guiding questions to inform your responses. You are not required to address all questions.

Other partners supporting collaborative local systems efforts:
- Is there a coordinating body in the state that your community/region interacts with to address cross-agency, cross-organizational issues?
- Are there coordinating bodies within your community/region to address cross-agency or cross-organizational issues?
- Do these community/regional coordinating bodies include both the public and private (both for-profit and nonprofit) sectors?
- Do these community/regional coordinating bodies have access to adequate data regarding prevention and treatment services that can inform their planning?
- Are there efforts to ensure that early childhood issues have a high profile on the public policy agenda in the region or community?
- Are services to adult caregivers coordinated with services targeted to young children (e.g., incarcerated women with children receive supported visits with foster parent and child, women in substance abuse treatment receive early care and education services for their children)?
- Do agencies and coalitions providing services and supports to adults (such as for issues related to substance abuse, mental health, justice, housing and employment) collaborate with agencies offering services to young children?
- Do the community's maternal and child health programs and the mental health agency currently collaborate?
- What regulations or legislation currently in place supports a public health approach?
- What is being done to ensure the existence of financing opportunities that can encourage the delivery of comprehensive, integrated and family-centered services?
- What financing strategies have been developed or utilized to encourage cross-agency coordination?
- Are all funding streams maximized to cover services for young children in the region or community?

Workforce capacity and knowledge of children and family's behavioral health:
- What efforts are underway to build a workforce that is trained in the public health approach?
- What efforts are planned or underway to provide interdisciplinary training on understanding healthy child development?
- What is the current local workforce development plan for staff working with children from birth to age eight and their families?

- Are family members encouraged to be active participants in all components of service delivery (i.e., the development and monitoring of policies, procedures and practices)?
- What efforts are underway to ensure that true family and community voices inform the system?
- Are policies being changed to reflect family-centered practices?
- How are the state and the local community supporting training, coaching and effective implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs)?
- What EBPs are being used at the current time?
- Is there a cross-agency data collection system?
- Are services being evaluated for effectiveness?
- What efforts are underway at the community level to ensure cultural and linguistic competence among providers and policymakers?
- What efforts are being made to reduce disparities in access to or receipt of services among families from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds?

Gaps, barriers or duplications in services and local systems:
- What needs of young children and families in the community are going unmet? What available programs, supports and services are designed to meet these needs?
- Are there any major problems not being addressed by a service, program or activity?
- Are the children and families who should be receiving wellness promotion and prevention programs, services and supports in fact receiving them? If not, why not?
- Are there duplicative services, programs, and supports attempting to address the same problem? If so, which are more effective and which are less so? Are those who are implementing the separate programs coordinating their efforts in any way?
- Are there documented policies and procedures for addressing behavioral health disparities?
- Is there a blending of funding across these various programs and efforts?

Defining a Population of Focus, Geographic Area and Approaches to Addressing Health Equity

The last component of the Environmental Scan requires further definition of a population of focus for LAUNCH Together, the refinement of the geographic area (if necessary) and approaches to addressing health equity related to this population based on findings from the scan. This will allow communities to further assess the impact of policies and programs on health disparities and inform strategies to decrease the differences in access, service use and outcomes for those sub-populations. Communities should consider all five strategies when identifying a population of focus and related opportunities to address health equity.

In addition, communities should consider what is needed at a broader level to support strategic planning, implementation, work force development efforts and systems-change efforts. Having a more complete understanding of both the needs and the resources in the community will lead to greater clarity of where the gaps and the most critical unmet needs exist.

One strategy for addressing health disparities is use of the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care. Culturally and linguistically appropriate health care and services, broadly defined as care and services that are respectful of and responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of all individuals, is increasingly seen as essential to reducing disparities and improving health care quality. The CLAS are composed of 15 standards and provide a blueprint for health and health care organizations to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services that will advance health equity, improve quality and help eliminate health care disparities. Communities can learn more about the CLAS at http://www.ThinkCulturalHealth.hhs.gov.

Submitting the Environmental Scan

An initial *draft* of the Environmental Scan should be submitted to Morgan Janke at mjanke@earlymilestones.org on or before **April 1, 2016**. The *final* Environmental Scan will be submitted along with all other planning tools to the LAUNCH Together fiscal agent on or before **July 1, 2016**. On the final version, please highlight any information that is new or has changed since the draft Environmental Scan was submitted. Additional instructions regarding the final submission will be provided at a later date.

Recommended Page Count for Environmental Scan Elements	
Description of methods for gathering data	Up to 2 pages
Environmental scan data	Completed templates
Population of focus and health equity challenges based on findings	Up to 2 pages