



What Data Do Head Start Grant Recipients Use in Applications to Convert Enrollment Slots to Center-Based Early Head Start?

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Federal policy allows Head Start¹ grant recipients to apply to the Office of Head Start to shift funding (i.e., convert enrollment slots) from Head Start services for preschool-age children to Early Head Start services for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. Head Start grant recipients applying to convert enrollment slots are required to cite data in their applications demonstrating that planned changes will best meet the needs of Head Start- and Early Head Start-eligible children and families in the community and will support program quality and sustainability (*Head Start Program Performance Standards*, 45 CFR 1302.11).² This brief describes the data sources and data points that Head Start grant recipients cited in applications to convert slots to center-based Early Head Start.

¹ The term Head Start refers to grant recipients that offer services for preschool-age children and their families. The term Early Head Start refers to programs serving families with children from birth to age 3; many also serve expectant families.

² Determining Community Strengths, Needs, and Resources, 45 CFR 1302.11 (2022), <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XIII/subchapter-B/part-1302>.

BOX 1

Key Definitions and Terms

Data sources. The citation or name of the dataset or other source of information referenced in a conversion application.

Data points. The variables, statistics, and indicators cited in conversion applications as evidence to support proposed changes. Example data points include data on care and education availability, need, and use for different age groups.

Characteristics of data sources. The type (administrative, representative survey, etc.), level of geographic detail, and year of data referenced in conversion applications as well as whether the data source reflects a perception or opinion.

Characteristics of data points. Whether data points reflected different children's age groups, constructs (care and education availability, need, and use), program enrollment or staffing challenges, or the pandemic.

Source: Authors' analysis.

About This Brief

This brief addresses the following research questions:

1. What data sources did Head Start grant recipients cite in applications to convert enrollment slots? What were the characteristics of data sources that were cited?
 2. What data points did Head Start grant recipients cite in applications to convert enrollment slots? What were the characteristics of data points that were cited?
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BOX 2

Key Findings

- The most common sources of data cited in conversion applications were program administrative data and data from representative surveys administered by the Census Bureau as well as other organizations.
- Almost all grant recipients (98 percent) cited data about early care and education need, and most (89 percent) cited data about early care and education use and availability.

Source: Authors' analysis.

Methods

Sample

To identify applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to center-based Early Head Start, we searched the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES). HSES is the central system through which grant recipients submit reports and applications to the Office of Head Start. We identified all Head Start grant recipients in Regions 1 through 10³ that submitted applications through HSES to convert enrollment slots to center-based Early Head Start in 2020, 2021, and 2022 and had those applications approved by June 2022. This brief focuses specifically on grant recipients that applied to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to center-based Early Head Start because the data sources cited to justify conversion can differ for those applying to convert to home-based versus center-based slots. We included 41, 39, and 28 Head Start grant recipients from 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively, in this study. After initial coding, we dropped 3 grant recipients for which the conversion application narrative was not available in HSES, resulting in a total sample of 105 conversion applications for this analysis.

Measures and Analytic Approach

We coded Head Start grant recipients' conversion applications for the characteristics of data points cited as evidence to support the proposed change and for the sources of these data points (see appendix A for the codes the team used). We calculated the share of applications that cited data sources and data points in conversion applications. Conversion applications could cite more than one data source and data point, and, therefore, the values included in figures can sum to more than 100 percent.

Findings

What Data Sources Did Head Start Grant Recipients Cite in Applications to Convert Enrollment Slots?

INTERNAL DATA SOURCES

Conversion applications cited a range of data sources to support the proposed change (figure 1). Nearly all conversion applications (92 percent—not shown) referenced the grant recipients' own data or data the program had collected. Program records, administrative data, and other local data collected by the program (88 percent) were the data sources most cited by grant recipients. Additionally, approximately 68 percent of applications cited data from the program's community assessment.⁴ Data from the

³ Grant recipients in Region 11 (the region representing grant recipients providing services to federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes) are not required to follow the same process as grant recipients in other regions, and those from Region 12 (the region representing grant recipients providing services to migrant and seasonal workers) all provide services for children from birth through age 5 under a single grant; therefore, grant recipients from these regions were not included in the sample.

⁴ Determining Community Strengths, Needs, and Resources, 45 CFR 1302.11 (2022), <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XIII/subchapter-B/part-1302>.

community assessments included grant recipients' program records and administrative data, as well as data compiled by the grant recipient from federal, state, and local government and other sources.⁵

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DATA SOURCES

The majority of conversion applications (62 percent—not shown) also cited data from federal government sources. About half (49 percent) of conversion applications explicitly referenced data from the Census Bureau, which includes the American Community Survey, and 15 percent cited data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count project that draws from data originally collected by the Census Bureau. Additionally, approximately 14 percent of applications cited data from "other" federal sources including federal education and unemployment data, and 10 percent of conversion applications cited Program Information Report data or data from the Office of Head Start collected by the Administration for Children and Families.

STATE GOVERNMENT DATA SOURCES

Half of conversion applications (50 percent—not shown) cited data collected by state government agencies. About 34 percent cited data from state sources other than the state early care and education (ECE) agency, including information on health indicators, K–12 and state public prekindergarten data, and economic information from state agencies. About 19 percent of conversion applications cited state ECE agency sources, such as ECE licensing records.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION DATA SOURCES

One-quarter (25 percent—not shown) of conversion applications cited data sources collected by local government or community organizations. These sources included data from community organizations (cited in 11 percent of conversion applications), such as food pantries and other local service providers; data from "other" substate government organizations including information from cities, towns, counties, or regional entities such as workforce boards (cited in 11 percent of conversion applications); local school and school district data (cited in 10 percent of conversion applications); child care resource and referral agencies (cited in 8 percent of conversion applications); and data or counts of the population that is homeless collected by these organizations (cited in 8 percent of conversion applications).

OTHER ORGANIZATION DATA SOURCES

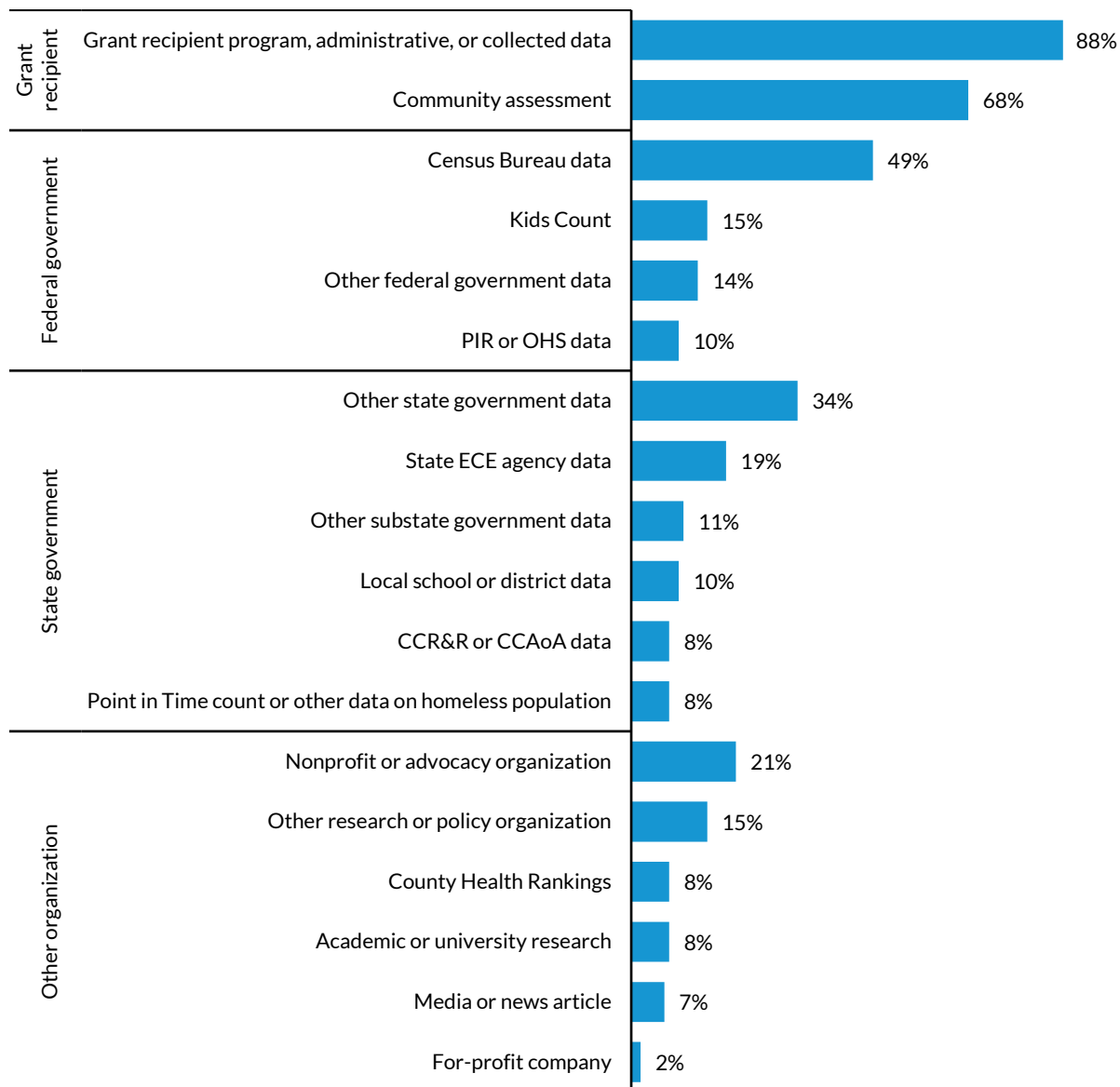
Finally, nearly half of conversion applications (46 percent—not shown) cited data sources collected by other groups including nonprofit and advocacy organizations, research and policy organizations, academic research, media, and for-profit companies. About one-fifth of conversion applications (21 percent) cited data from national and state nonprofit and advocacy organizations that promote particular issues or causes. Additionally, 15 percent of conversion applications cited data from "other" research or policy organizations including government contractors and think tanks, 8 percent cited data from the County Health Rankings project, and 8 percent cited academic or university studies and

⁵ Grant recipients were not required to upload the full community assessments to HSES along with conversion applications. We often could not identify the original source of data from community assessments cited in applications when the community assessment could not be located.

research. Few conversion applications cited data sources from the media (7 percent) or for-profit companies (2 percent).

FIGURE 1

Share of Conversion Applications Citing Data from Different Sources by Type of Organization Collecting Data



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

Notes: Values sum to more than 100 because conversion applications can cite multiple sources. *N* = 105 conversion applications. CCR&R = child care resource and referral agencies; CCAoA = Child Care Aware of America; PIR = Program Information Report; OHS = Office of Head Start. The “other organization” category for the type of organization collecting data includes nonprofit and advocacy organizations, research and policy organizations, media, and for-profit organizations. “Kids Count” primarily draws from Census Bureau data and is categorized as a source collected by the federal government based on the original data source. The

“other federal government” category includes the Department of Labor, Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services except the Office of Head Start, and other federal agencies and entities. The “other state government” category includes state health, workforce, and economic development agencies. The “other substate government” category includes counties, cities, towns, or substate regions.

What Were the Characteristics of Data Sources Referenced in Applications to Convert Enrollment Slots?

This section examines characteristics of the data sources grant recipients used in their conversion applications.⁶ The characteristics of data sources we analyzed include the type of data captured, whether the source reflected a perspective or opinion, the geographic level of data, and the year of data from the source.

WHAT TYPES OF DATA SOURCES DID GRANT RECIPIENTS USE IN APPLICATIONS TO CONVERT ENROLLMENT SLOTS?

Conversion applications cited multiple types of data sources as evidence of community need (figure 2). Types of data sources cited include administrative data, surveys, and data sources collected through interviews or focus groups. Nearly three-quarters of conversion applications (73 percent) cited grant recipients’ program records or administrative data, which include information on funded enrollment slots, enrollment, waitlists, program staffing, and organizational finances and operations (but not data collected by the program through surveys, interviews, or other methods). Nearly as many conversion applications (69 percent) cited data from representative surveys including the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and decennial census, as well as other surveys that employ rigorous sampling methods that may be collected by government, researchers, nonprofit organizations, and care and education providers.

Grant recipients also cited other types of data sources. About one-third of grant recipients (34 percent) cited “other” administrative data sources such as early education and child care licensing records and other ECE providers’ data. Slightly less than one-third of conversion applications (31 percent) cited local data collected by the program, community organizations, ECE providers, or other organizations. One-quarter (25 percent) of grant recipients referenced information from federal, state, or local vital records on births, reflecting a need for Early Head Start services—or deaths, illustrating community challenges. Roughly the same share of applications cited data from local education agency sources on K–12 schools and from local prekindergarten programs.

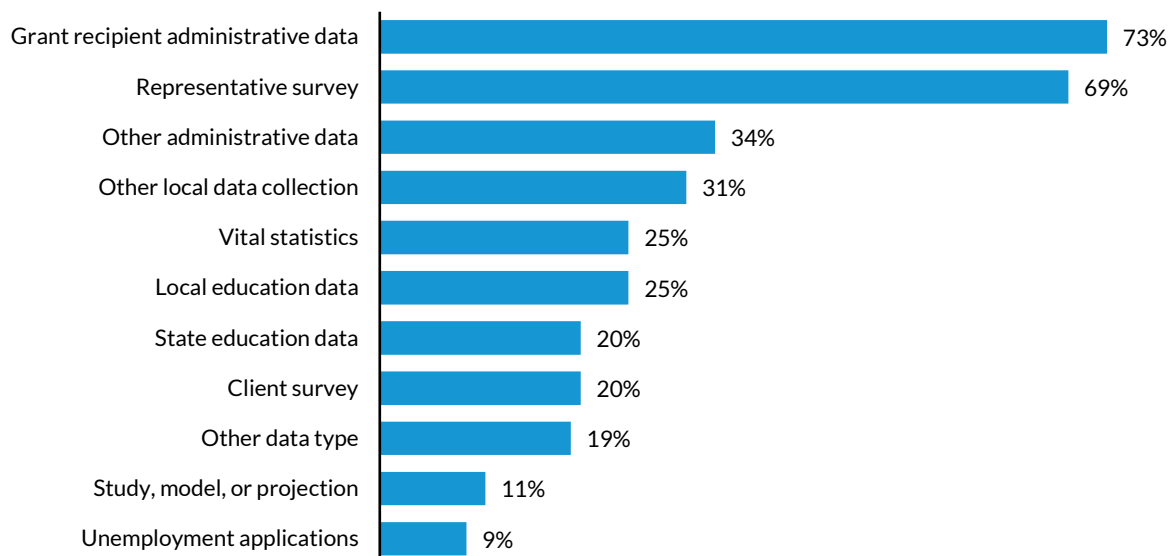
About one-fifth of conversion applications cited state education data sources (20 percent), such as data on K–12 schools and public prekindergarten; surveys of clients of the grant recipient or other care

⁶ The figures in this section reflect the characteristics of the specific data sources identified in figure 1 as well as others where the specific source could not be identified but the characteristics of the source could be identified or inferred from the conversion application narrative. Grant recipients in Region 11 (the region representing grant recipients providing services to federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes) are not required to follow the same process as grant recipients in other regions, and those from Region 12 (the region representing grant recipients providing services to migrant and seasonal workers) provide services for children from birth through age 5; therefore, grant recipients from these regions were not included in the sample.

and education programs (20 percent); and other types of data sources (19 percent), such as nonrepresentative surveys and opinions from people or organizations. Only about one-tenth of conversion applications cited data from unemployment applications (9 percent) or studies, models, or projections (11 percent), including population projections and research analyzing the relationship between participation in ECE and outcomes for children and their families.

FIGURE 2

Types of Data Sources Cited in Conversion Applications



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

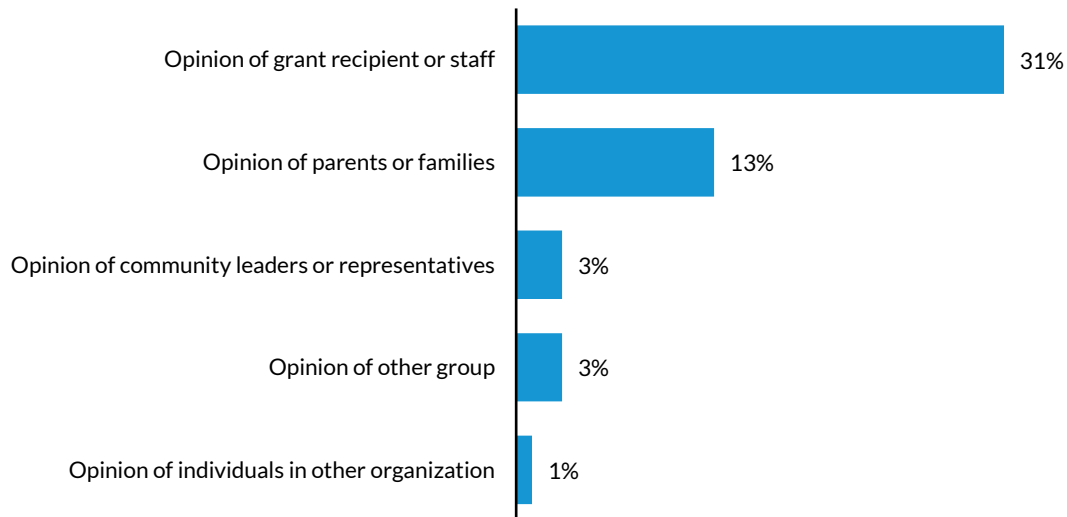
Notes: Values sum to more than 100 because conversion applications can cite multiple sources. *N* = 105 conversion applications.

WHAT SHARE OF CONVERSION APPLICATIONS CITED INFORMATION BASED ON PERSPECTIVES OR OPINIONS?

Some conversion applications cited sources that reflected opinions or perspectives of people or groups (i.e., views from personal experience or lived expertise that did not specifically reference data or external sources). About one-third (31 percent) of conversion applications cited the opinions of grant recipient leadership or staff, while approximately 13 percent cited sources that reflected the perspectives of parents or families (figure 3). Fewer conversion applications cited opinions or views from other groups. A small share of conversion applications (3 percent) did not cite specific data points and only referenced opinions or perspectives.

FIGURE 3

Share of Conversion Applications Citing Opinions or Perspectives by Source of Opinion or Perspective



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

Notes: Values do not sum to 100 because not all conversion applications cited sources that reflected a perspective or opinion. N = 105 conversion applications.

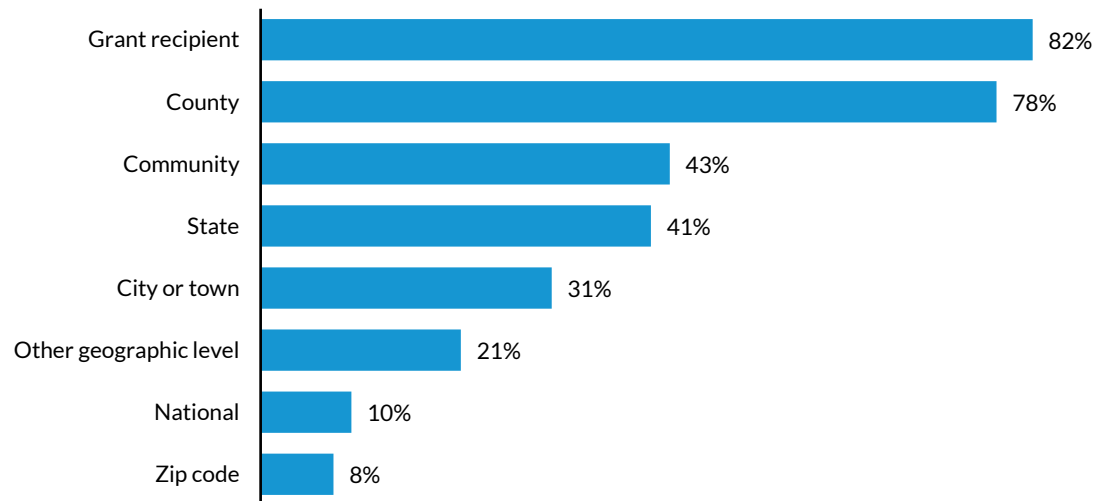
WHAT SHARE OF CONVERSION APPLICATIONS CITED DATA SOURCES AT DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIC LEVELS?

Conversion applications included data sources from different geographic levels. Most conversion applications cited data from sources at the grant recipient (82 percent) or county (78 percent) levels (figure 4). Many grant recipients' service areas comprised either a single county or multiple counties, meaning county-level data can be appropriate to provide insight about community need and care and education options for infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children. Further, data about factors related to need for services such as child age and poverty were available at the county level from public sources such as the American Community Survey, while grant recipient-level data from the program could demonstrate need for services and program challenges.

A smaller share of conversion applications cited data from sources at other geographic levels. About two-fifths of conversion applications cited data from community-level sources (43 percent), which include the neighborhood level and other local geographies except the zip code level, and from state-level sources (41 percent). Slightly less than one-third (31 percent) of conversion applications cited data from sources at the city or town level, and around one-fifth (21 percent) cited data sources for other geographies, including metropolitan and micropolitan areas and substate regions, besides the coded categories. Few cited data from sources at the national level (10 percent) or local zip code level (8 percent).

FIGURE 4

Frequency of Citing Data Sources at Different Geographic Levels



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

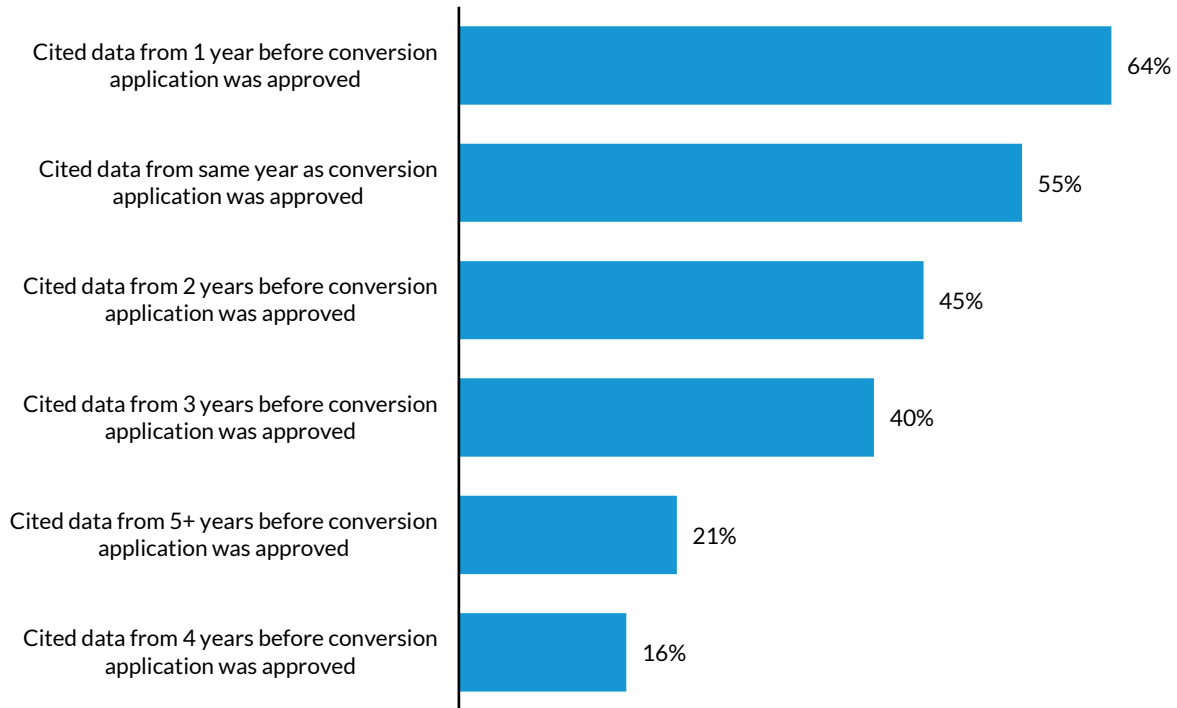
Notes: Values sum to more than 100 because conversion applications can cite multiple sources. *N* = 105 conversion applications.

HOW RECENT WERE THE DATA SOURCES CITED IN CONVERSION APPLICATIONS?

The data sources cited in conversion applications reflect a range of years. Citing recent data allowed grant recipients to provide a snapshot of community need, Head Start program utilization, and other evidence to support a conversion application. The majority of conversion applications referenced data sources from the year before the application was approved (64 percent) or the same year in which the application was approved (55 percent) (figure 5). However, not all sources make data available for the current or prior year. Approximately 45 percent of applications cited data sources from two years before the application's approval, and 40 percent cited sources from three years before application approval. Fewer grant recipients cited data sources from four years or five or more years before approval of the conversion application (16 percent and 21 percent, respectively). More than three-quarters (77 percent—not shown) of applications cited data sources showing change over time to provide a sense of where the community and program have been and may be headed.

FIGURE 5

Share of Conversion Applications Citing Data Sources from Same Year or Prior Years



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

Notes: Values sum to more than 100 because conversion applications can cite multiple data points from different years. *N* = 105 conversion applications.

What Data Points Did Head Start Grant Recipients Cite in Applications to Convert Enrollment Slots? What Were the Characteristics of Data Points That Were Cited?

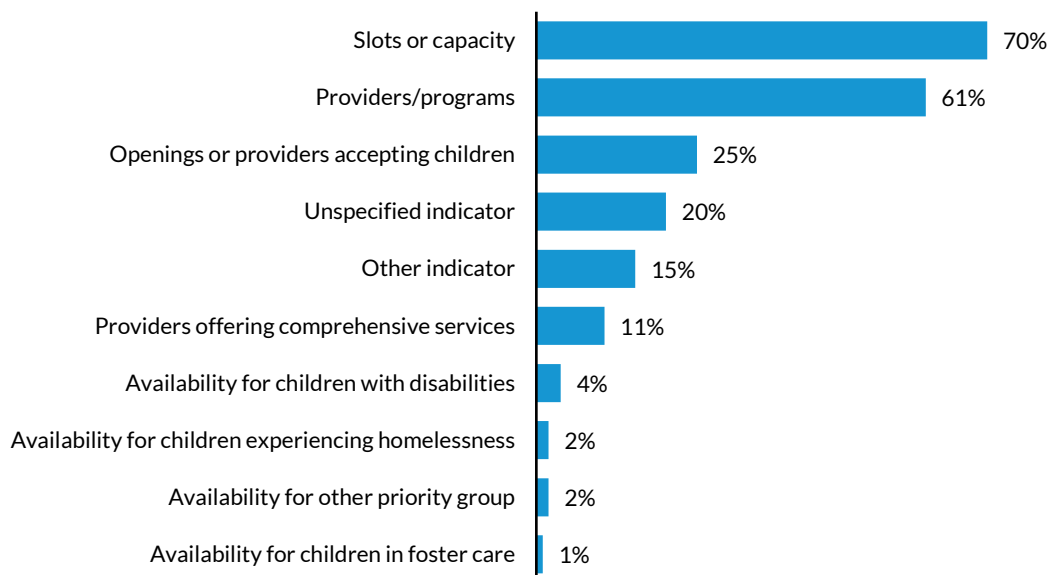
Conversion applications cited data points on care and education availability, need, and use for different age groups to demonstrate community need for Early Head Start services; competition from other ECE providers serving preschool-age children; and adequate capacity in the community to continue serving Head Start-eligible children and avoid displacing children currently enrolled in the program. They also cited data on the characteristics of the community from their community assessments and other sources to illustrate the broader set of needs, strengths, and resources present in the community.

WHAT SHARE OF CONVERSION APPLICATIONS CITED DATA POINTS ON CARE AND EDUCATION AVAILABILITY?

Data points on availability reflected the prevalence and capacity of care and education providers and programs. Conversion applications cited data points describing the availability of care and education provided by the program, public preschool providers, and other early care and education providers to demonstrate competition for providing services to preschool-age children and adequate capacity to continue serving Head Start-eligible children after the conversion (figure 6). Most conversion

applications (89 percent—not shown) included at least one data point on early care and education availability. Conversion applications most frequently cited availability indicators in the form of provider slots or capacity (70 percent) and the prevalence of providers or programs (61 percent). Conversion applications referenced data points on other availability indicators and availability for Head Start and Early Head Start priority groups less frequently.

FIGURE 6
Share of Conversion Applications Citing Availability Indicator



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

Notes: Values sum to more than 100 because conversion applications can cite multiple data points. *N* = 105 conversion applications. “Other indicator” includes care and education staffing and workforce as well as physical space or facilities.

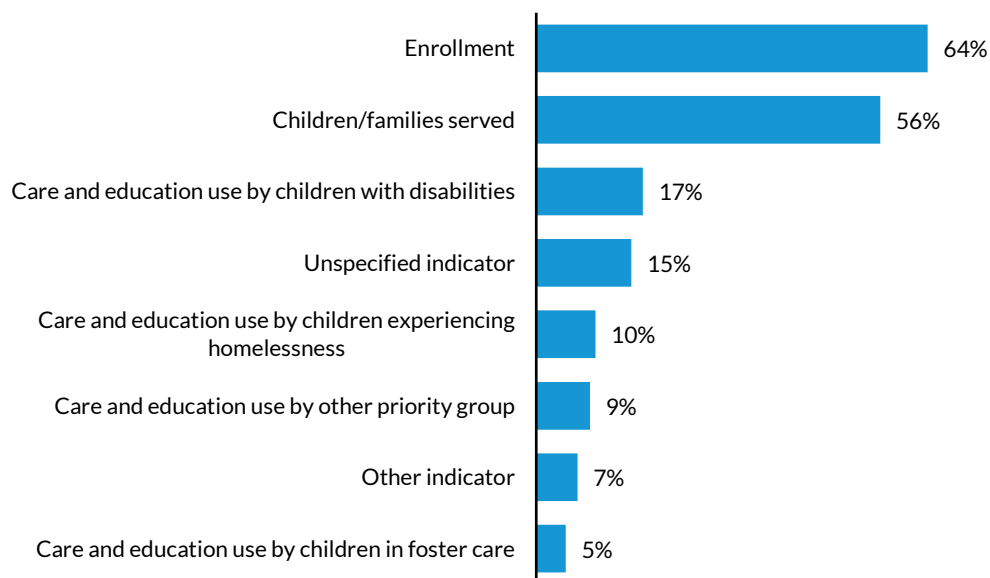
WHAT SHARE OF CONVERSION APPLICATIONS CITED DATA POINTS ON CARE AND EDUCATION USE?

Information on care and education use reflected enrollment in care and education programs or the number of children and families in the community using care and education or other services (figure 7). Conversion applications cited data points on care and education use and enrollment as evidence of competition to serve preschool-age children. Grant recipients also cited their own enrollment as evidence of Head Start enrollment challenges or how they would avoid displacing currently enrolled children. They cited consistently full Early Head Start enrollment as evidence of their ability to fill converted slots. Most conversion applications (89 percent—not shown) included at least one data point on care and education use. Nearly two-thirds of conversion applications (64 percent) cited care and education use in the form of provider or program enrollment, and the majority (56 percent) included data points on the number of children or families receiving services from any provider—another use

indicator. Conversion applications referenced data points on other care and education use indicators, including for Head Start and Early Head Start priority groups, less often.

FIGURE 7

Share of Conversion Applications Citing Care and Education Use Indicator



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

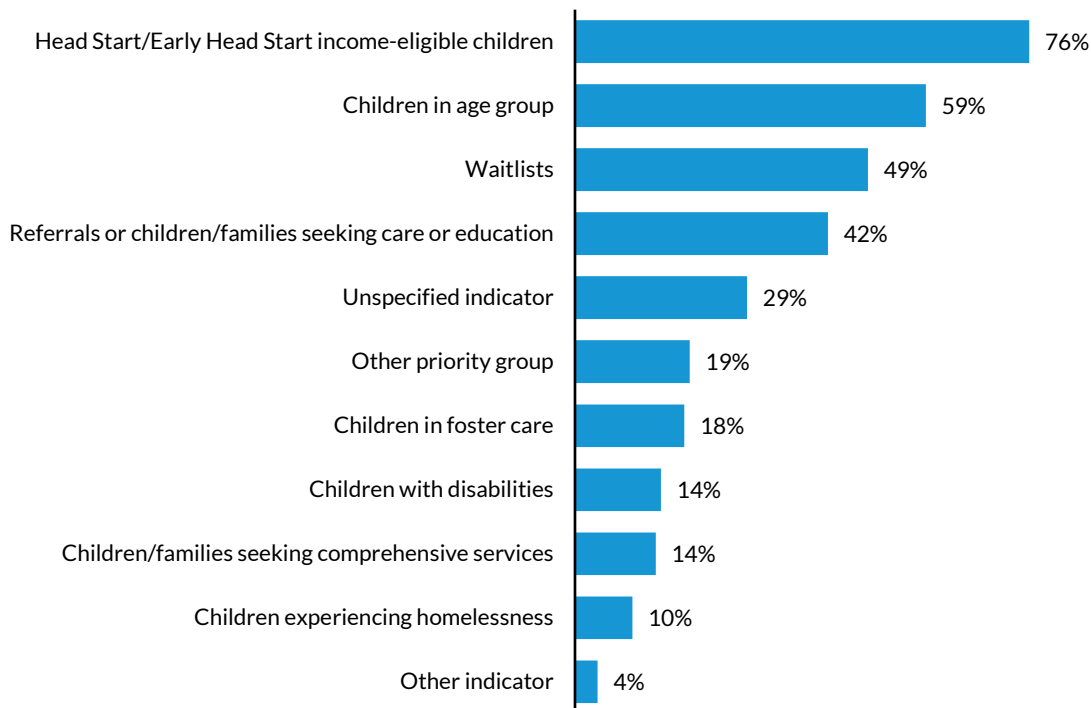
Notes: Values sum to more than 100 because conversion applications can cite multiple data points. *N* = 105 conversion applications. "Other indicator" includes attendance and absenteeism and access and use of comprehensive services.

WHAT SHARE OF CONVERSION APPLICATIONS CITED DATA POINTS ON CARE AND EDUCATION NEED?

In contrast to *use*, care and education *need* reflected the potential demand for care and education—and children and families that could potentially use them—rather than current participation. Need is more expansive than use. Conversion applications cited data points on need for early care and education to demonstrate community need for Early Head Start services and declining need for Head Start services (figure 8). Almost all conversion applications (98 percent—not shown) cited one or more data points on care and education need. Grant recipients most often cited ECE need indicators on the size of the population eligible for Head Start or Early Head Start. Three-quarters (76 percent) of conversion applications cited care and education need indicators on the number of Head Start or Early Head Start income-eligible children or families, and around three-fifths (59 percent) cited need indicators on the number of children in Head Start— or Early Head Start—age groups. Substantial shares of conversion applications also cited waitlist data (49 percent) and referrals or children or families seeking care or education (42 percent) that reflected need from families looking for care. Fewer conversion applications cited other indicators of care and education need.

FIGURE 8

Share of Conversion Applications Citing Need Indicator



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

Notes: Values sum to more than 100 because conversion applications can cite multiple data points. *N* = 105 conversion applications. “Other indicator” includes families expressing interest or a preference for Head Start or Early Head Start and children and families participating in safety net programs.

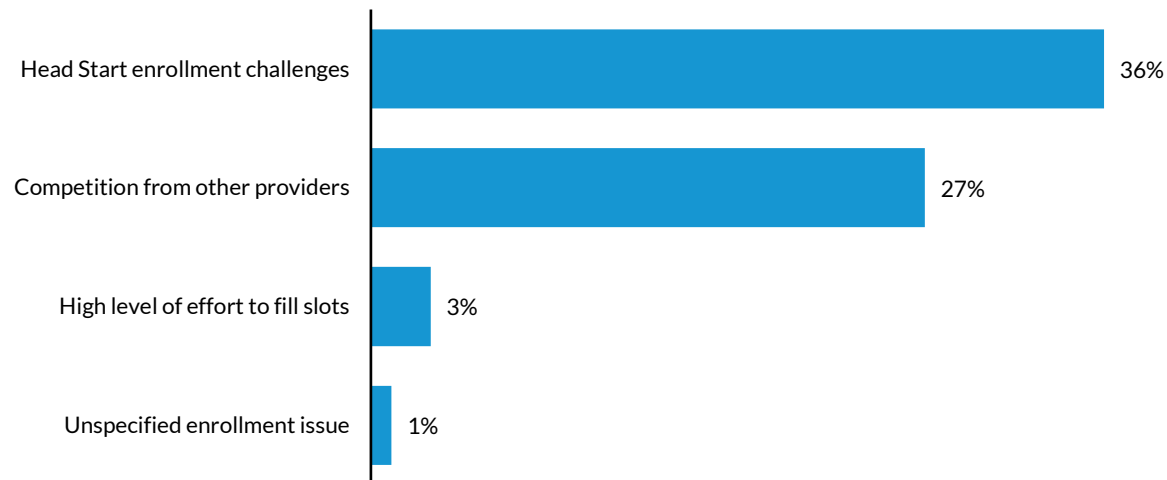
WHAT SHARE OF CONVERSION APPLICATIONS CITED DATA POINTS ON ENROLLMENT CHALLENGES, STAFFING CHALLENGES, OR THE PANDEMIC?

Approximately 66 percent of conversion applications referenced data points related to Head Start enrollment issues (figure 9)—the same share that stated enrollment challenges were a motivation for the conversion (Lou, Berger, and Schilder 2023). The most common enrollment issues referenced were enrollment challenges (36 percent) and competition from other providers (27 percent).

Additionally, 8 percent of conversion applications referenced data points on staffing challenges (not shown), and 35 percent of grant recipients included data points that referenced the pandemic (not shown). Similar shares of grant recipients cited staffing challenges (8 percent) or the pandemic (36 percent) as motivations or a contextual factor in applying to convert slots (Lou, Berger, and Schilder 2023).

FIGURE 9

Conversion Applications Referencing Data Points Related to Head Start Enrollment Issues



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

Note: N = 105 conversion applications.

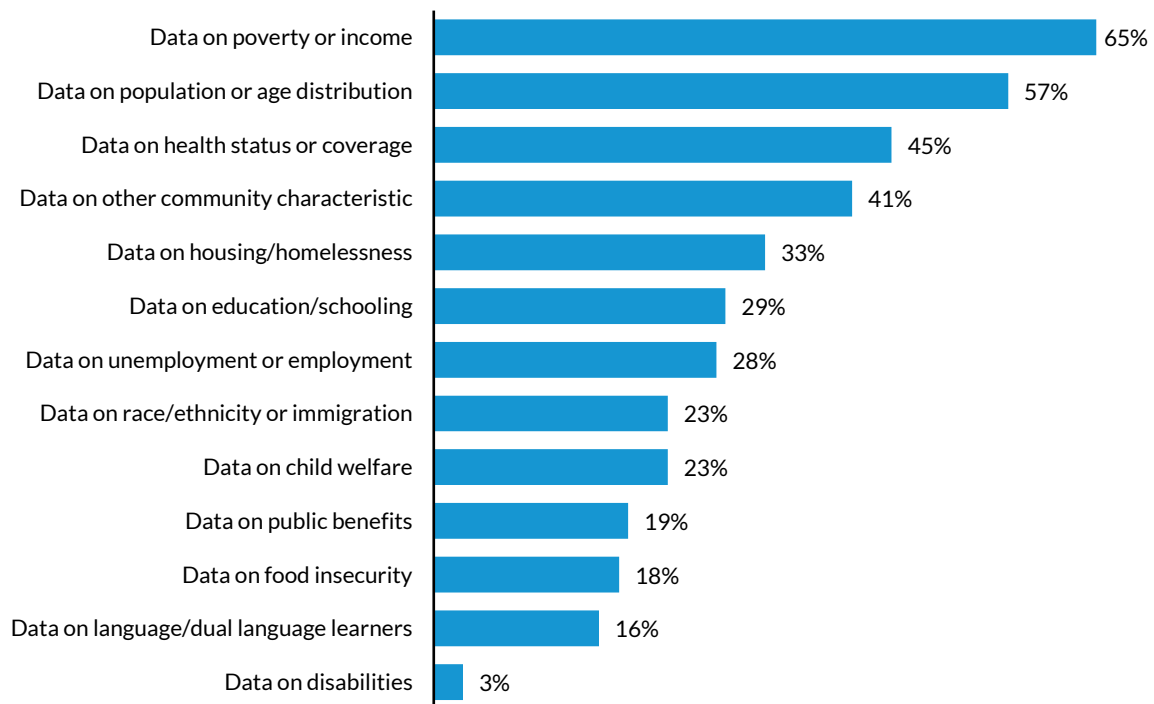
WHAT SHARE OF CONVERSION APPLICATIONS CITED DATA POINTS ON OTHER COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS?

Federal guidelines require grant recipients to conduct community assessments (*Head Start Program Performance Standards*, 45 CFR 1302.11)⁷ that capture community needs, strengths, and resources beyond care and education (see appendix B for information that grant recipients are required to include in community assessments). Conversion applications cited information on community characteristics from community needs assessments and other sources. The most frequently cited data points in conversion applications were on community economic circumstances or the overall population. About two-thirds (65 percent) of conversion applications cited data on poverty status or income for adults, families, and households (figure 10). Additionally, the majority (57 percent) cited population data or data points on the age distribution of the population that was not of Head Start or Early Head Start age. Nearly half (45 percent) of conversion applications cited data points on health insurance coverage or health status of adults or older children. Conversion applications less frequently cited data points on housing or homelessness, educational attainment or academic achievement, employment, and other factors associated with community needs or challenges.

⁷ Determining Community Strengths, Needs, and Resources, 45 CFR 1302.11 (2022), <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XIII/subchapter-B/part-1302>.

FIGURE 10

Share of Conversion Applications Citing Data Points on Community Factors



Source: Urban Institute coding and analysis of applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start, downloaded from the HSES.

Notes: Values sum to more than 100 because conversion applications can cite multiple data points. *N* = 105 conversion applications. The “other community characteristic” category includes data points on geographic orientation and adjacency of different areas, transportation, weather, crime, substance use, and cost of gas and other essentials.

Conclusion

Head Start regulations require grant recipients applying to convert slots from Head Start to Early Head Start to use data to demonstrate how the change will best meet the needs of the community and support program quality and sustainability. To support conversion applications, grant recipients cited a range of data sources. They most often cited program data or data collected from clients or the local community. Almost all conversion applications (92 percent) cited data sources maintained or collected by the grant recipient to support the proposed conversion—most frequently (73 percent) in the form of program records or administrative data on program staffing, enrollment, waitlists, capacity, or finances. Nearly as many conversion applications (69 percent) cited representative surveys from government agencies, researchers, or local community organizations. Overall, more than half (62 percent) of conversion applications referenced sources collected by the federal government, with about half (49 percent) specifically citing data from Census Bureau sources.

Grant recipients cited data points on availability, need, and use of care and education for different age groups to demonstrate community need for Early Head Start services as well as adequate capacity

to continue serving Head Start–eligible children. Nearly all conversion applications examined (98 percent) cited data points on need for early education or child care. Most grant recipients also cited data points on care and education availability (89 percent) and use (89 percent).

This analysis answered questions about the different data sources and data points cited in conversion applications, but additional questions remain for future research. For example, future work could examine how easy it is for grant recipients to acquire and use data from community assessments, program administrative records, government surveys, and other sources to support applications to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to Early Head Start.

Appendix A. Methodology

We accessed HSES to identify conversion applications seeking to convert enrollment slots from Head Start to center-based Early Head Start that were approved by the regional office in fiscal years 2020 and 2021 and in 2022 through June. We limited the sample to Head Start grant recipients in Regions 1 through 10.⁸ This yielded a sample of 41 conversion applications in the 2020 cohort, 39 conversion applications in the 2021 cohort, and 28 conversion applications in the 2022 cohort for a total of 108 unique conversion applications. After initial coding, we dropped 3 of these conversion applications where the original conversion application narrative was not available to code, resulting in 105 conversion applications included in the analysis.

Analytic Techniques

To address all research questions, we reviewed each conversion application and coded information on the grant recipient, the proposed conversion, and the data points and sources cited in the conversion application. We developed a set of fields to capture information in each of these areas and a coding scheme (see codes in table A.1 below) based on a preliminary review of 10 conversion applications. We refined and added categories to the coding scheme after internal review and coding additional conversion applications. Grant recipients often included multiple statistics or data points in a sentence, and we found it challenging to parse the number of data points in a statement consistently and reliably. Therefore, we coded information about whether or not each conversion application had cited data points or sources with each of the characteristics captured in our coding scheme rather than the number of data points with each characteristic. After quality assurance review to check coding and improve consistency across conversion applications, we further cleaned, collapsed, and refined coding; validated coding across fields; and analyzed the data using the Stata statistical programming package.

⁸ Grant recipients in Region 11 (the region representing grant recipients providing services to federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes) are not required to follow the same process as grant recipients in other regions, and those from Region 12 (the region representing grant recipients providing services to migrant and seasonal workers) provide services for children from birth through age 5; therefore, grant recipients from these regions were not included in the sample.

Limitations

Our data analysis was based on a sample of grant recipients that submitted conversion applications to convert enrollment slots from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2022 and was not representative of all conversion applications. The sample includes only conversion applications approved during this period and not those submitted through the competitive grant process. Some conversion applications also included Head Start reductions or other changes such as Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership grants that were also reflected in the proposed changes to funded slots, but we did not focus our coding and analysis on these changes.

We report themes that we identified based on the coding and analysis of conversion applications; narratives and figures were based on information that grant recipients voluntarily reported. As described above, we focused on the share of conversion applications that referenced different data sources or indicators in their conversion application rather than the number or share of data points or sources with each characteristic. Further, when grant recipients referenced an intermediary source, such as their community assessment or a report, we attempted to identify the original source using the intermediary document. However, information on the original source could not always be identified because the community assessment or source that was referred to could not always be located.

TABLE A.1
Analysis Constructs and Coding

Construct	Coding
Grant recipient information	
General information	Grant recipient name, number, state(s), and Head Start region where operating.
Documentation availability	Coded whether or not the conversion application narrative and community assessment documents were located and downloaded from HSES or elsewhere.
Self-described service area	Copied in narrative from conversion application that includes the description of the grant applicant's service area.
Conversion information	
Proposed changes to HS and EHS slots	Copied in narrative from conversion application describing proposed changes.
Number of HS and EHS slots before conversion and proposed HS and EHS slots post-conversion	Coded the number of existing funded HS and EHS slots and funded HS and EHS slots proposed post-conversion.
Converts slots from full time to part time or part time to full time	Coded whether or not conversion application proposed converting any HS or EHS slots from full time to part time or vice versa. Coded as missing/not provided if grant recipient did not include information on full-time/part-time status of slots.
Location(s) converting slots	Copied in narrative from conversion application describing the specific sites or communities where grant recipient proposed converting slots.
Conversion application dates	Coded date grant recipient originally submitted conversion application, date conversion application was approved, and timing of conversion going into effect.

Construct	Coding
Data cited to support conversion application	
Data point or statistic cited	Copied narrative text containing numeric values, percentages, estimates, statements, or other information referenced in conversion application.
Name of data source referenced	Coded the name or link to the data source that is cited in conversion application, including name of original data source if different from source referenced (e.g., American Community Survey for Kids Count data or original source if community assessment cited).
Organization that collected data	Type of organization that collected data point cited in conversion application. Coded as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ federal government ■ state government ■ local government or community organization ■ HS grant recipient ■ other organization
Level of geographic detail	Geographic level at which the data cited in conversion application are reported. Coded as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ national ■ state ■ county ■ city or town ■ zip code ■ community ■ grant recipient level ■ other geographic level
Data type	Type of data that is cited in conversion application. Coded as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ grant recipient's administrative data ■ state education data ■ local education data ■ vital statistics ■ unemployment applications ■ other administrative data ■ representative survey ■ client survey ■ other local data collection ■ study, model, or projection ■ other data type
Data point reflects opinion or perception	The data point or statement cited to support conversion application reflects an opinion or perception from a group or people rather than quantitative data. Coded as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ opinion of parents or families ■ opinion of community leaders or representatives ■ opinion of grant recipient or staff ■ opinion of people in other organizations ■ opinion of other group
Recency of data	Year or timespan represented by data cited in conversion application, including year of publication, if applicable.
Trend or snapshot data	Coded as whether the data cited reflected (1) trends, multiple time points, or a timespan, or (2) a snapshot or single point in time.

Construct	Coding
Data references infants/toddlers	<p>Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to specific infant- or toddler-age groups. Coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> infants, toddlers, and/or pregnant women (prenatal–<36 months) combined or in general infants (<12 months) only toddlers (12–<36 months) only pregnant women (prenatal) only group referenced but specific ages not specified age group not referenced
Data reference infant/toddler care and education availability, use, or potential need	Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to specific infant- or toddler-age groups listed above.
Data reference preschool-age children	<p>Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to specific age groups of children ages 3–5. Coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ages 3–5 ages 3–4 ages 4–5 age 3 only age 4 only age 5 only group referenced but specific ages not specified age group not referenced
Data reference preschool-age care and education availability, use, or potential need	Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to specific preschool-age groups listed above.
Care and education availability indicator referenced in data	<p>Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to specific availability indicators. Coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> number of providers or programs slots or capacity openings or providers accepting children (including lack of openings or providers accepting children) providers offering comprehensive services (i.e., health, social, nutrition, K–12/higher education, etc.) availability for children with disabilities availability for children in foster care availability for children experiencing homelessness availability for other priority groups other availability indicator unspecified indicator care and education availability not referenced
Care and education use indicator referenced in data	<p>Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to specific care and education use or enrollment indicators. Coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enrollment (in specific programs or providers, including grant recipient) children/families served (in an area) care and education use by children with disabilities care and education use by children in foster care care and education use by children experiencing homelessness care and education use by other priority groups other care and education use indicator unspecified indicator care and education use not referenced

Construct	Coding
Care and education need indicator referenced in data	<p>Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to specific indicators of need or potential need for care and education. Coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ children in age group ■ HS/EHS income-eligible children ■ waitlists ■ referrals or children/families seeking care or education ■ children/families seeking comprehensive services ■ need from children with disabilities ■ need from children in foster care ■ need from children experiencing homelessness ■ need from other priority groups ■ other need indicator ■ unspecified indicator ■ care and education need not referenced
Enrollment challenges referenced	<p>Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to issues related to HS enrollment challenges. Coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ HS enrollment challenges ■ competition from other providers ■ high level of effort to fill slots ■ unspecified enrollment issue ■ not referenced
Staffing challenges referenced	<p>Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to issues related to program staffing challenges. Coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ insufficient HS staffing because of turnover/retention issues ■ insufficient HS staffing because of lack of qualified candidates or requirements for staff (i.e., Head Start Program Performance Standards bachelor's degree requirement) ■ insufficient HS staffing because of competition from public preschool or other programs ■ insufficient HS staffing because of other challenge with hiring staff ■ insufficient staffing of HS teachers cited (other or unspecified reason) ■ unspecified issue ■ not referenced
Community characteristic	<p>Coded as whether data cited in the conversion application refer to community characteristic. Coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ data on poverty or income ■ data on population or age distribution ■ data on health status or coverage ■ data on other community characteristic ■ data on housing/homelessness ■ data on education/schooling ■ data on unemployment or employment ■ data on race/ethnicity or immigration ■ data on child welfare ■ data on public benefits ■ data on food insecurity ■ data on language/dual language learners ■ data on disabilities

Note: EHS = Early Head Start. HS = Head Start.

Appendix B. Evidence Grant Recipients are Required to Provide in Conversion Applications

The Head Start Program Performance Standards require grant recipients to include data from their community assessments showing a need for Early Head Start in conversion applications. These standards require grant recipients to conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period, and they must review and update the assessment annually to reflect significant changes. These changes include the increased availability of public preschool, whether it is offered for a full school day, and whether public preschool can meet the needs of Head Start-eligible children and families. The community assessment is intended to ensure that programs meet the needs of Head Start-eligible children and families in their community.

Community assessments must use data that describe community strengths, needs, and resources, including the following:

- the number of eligible children, including infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, expectant mothers, those experiencing homelessness, those in foster care, and those with disabilities; community assessments must also detail children’s geographic location, race, and ethnicity and the languages they speak
- the education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being
- typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children
- other child development, child care, and family child care programs and providers that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of eligible children served
- resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families, and strengths of the community (*Head Start Program Performance Standards*, 45 CFR 1302.11).⁹

References

Lou, Cary, Rebecca H. Berger, and Diane Schilder. 2023. “Why Do Head Start Grant Recipients Apply to Convert Enrollment Slots?” OPRE Report #2023-231. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

⁹ Determining Community Strengths, Needs, and Resources, 45 CFR 1302.11 (2022), <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XIII/subchapter-B/part-1302>.

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