

Tips for Developing RSA Questions about Ecosystem Conditions

How should you decide what regional system assessment questions to ask about [ecosystem conditions](#)? The following tips can help guide your Hub in developing ecosystem condition questions to ask in your region.



Review what you already know

Review information from existing reports and materials (e.g., prior ECE Sector Plan, Community Health Needs Assessments, meeting notes, etc.) about ecosystem conditions affecting ECE access in your region.

See this [tool](#) for guidance on how to harvest this information from existing reports and compile it into the [RSA workbook](#).



Determine where to go deeper

When you come across descriptions of an ecosystem condition in existing reports or materials, determine if you fully understand the condition and the root causes for why it is happening. If not, ask assessment questions to better understand the situation and related root causes. HINT: use the tables in the step 3 (section a) tab of the [RSA workbook](#) to help develop these questions.

EXAMPLE: Let's say you know from prior reports that regional organizations and groups are not always authentically engaging diverse families in decision-making about ECE access (e.g., decisions about what ECE settings families want to be placed into, how to design enrollment processes, where to locate new ECE settings, etc.). However, you don't fully understand the root causes for *why* families are not being engaged. You could ask assessment questions to understand these root causes, such as: "To what extent do cross-sector leaders and staff have the mindsets and skills needed to engage families?" "To what extent are policies and practices in place to find, recruit, and compensate families to engage in regional decision-making processes?"

EXAMPLE: Let's say you know there is a new program recently launched to help prospective ECE providers navigate licensing requirements. You could ask assessment questions about to what extent that program is working and reaching diverse types of prospective ECE providers, and reasons why this is/is not happening.



Identify new ecosystem conditions to explore

Identify which ecosystem conditions have not yet been fully explored in existing reports and materials. Develop assessment questions to investigate different dimensions of these ecosystem condition areas. HINT: use the example follow-up areas listed in light grey within the table on pages 15-17 of the [RSA Toolkit](#) to help develop these questions.

EXAMPLE: Let's say prior reports mention policy barriers families are experiencing related to ECE enrollment, but there is no mention of policy barriers related to qualifying for ECE subsidies. You could ask assessment questions to explore these latter policy barriers.

EXAMPLE: You notice existing reports and materials do not talk about how the goals guiding cross-sector organizations and initiatives are helping or hindering ECE access. You could ask some broad questions to explore this ecosystem area, and use follow-up questions to more deeply explore the situation.