

*System Transformation for Equitable
Preschools (STEP Forward with Data)
Framework Implementation Guide*

Activity 3: Identifying focal populations of interest

This resource is part of a larger Implementation Guide for the STEP Forward with Data Framework. For more information, find the complete [Implementation Guide](#) or visit the [STEP Forward with Data Framework website](#).

Child Trends.

The Early Childhood
DATA
Collaborative

Activity 3: Identifying focal populations of interest

Once you have a holistic understanding of your preschool system and the data landscape, you can pivot into identifying the specific focal populations you would like to focus on through your implementation of the STEP Forward with Data Framework. As defined in the Framework, focal populations are “populations of children, families, and workforce members that have been shown in history and research to experience inequities in the preschool system. These populations should be identified by you, as a preschool system leader, in partnership with their community.”

In the Framework, we identified the following focal populations:

- Families experiencing poverty
- Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Indigenous families
- Families of children with disabilities or developmental delays
- Children in immigrant families
- Families with multilingual learners
- Preschool workforce members
- People with intersectional needs and identities

Identifying focal populations for the implementation of the Framework in your state involves acknowledging that the preschool system was not built to support the needs of every child and family and that certain groups have been left out of access to high-quality preschool programs. Improving the system for one group has the potential to improve the system for all.

We strongly recommend that, as a preschool systems leader, you adopt all the identified focal populations as populations of interest in your effort to make the preschool system equitable. However, we acknowledge that each community may have their unique set of needs and histories that may result in various combinations of populations who make up the focal populations. We suggest conducting a community survey with families about preschool to help co-create and identify which focal populations are of most interest to your system.

The emphasis on focal populations is meant to be neither restrictive nor exhaustive. We acknowledge that each community differs in the types of populations that could most benefit from system-level changes to preschool or the types of populations determined via other agency or policy priorities. Ultimately, we encourage you to answer the question: For whom are my efforts to make the preschool system equitable? Who has faced the most inequities in my preschool system?

Guiding Questions for Identifying Focal Populations of Interest

Are there specific populations of children, families, or workforce members that you and your partners in your state have identified as focal populations? If so, please list them here and describe why they are focal populations for your preschool system.

Are there specific populations of children, families, or workforce members in your community or state that are not enrolled in your preschool system, or are under enrolled based on the percentage within your community or state?

Within these focal populations, are there subpopulations that may hold additional identities that are of interest? For example, children with disabilities living in poverty.

Do you have data showing these children, families, or workforce members are experiencing disproportionate access, experiences, or outcomes within the preschool system compared to their peers?

After you have identified the focal population(s) you wish to focus on for Framework implementation, you can use this template to ensure you have the necessary data needed to answer the Framework questions. The first row provides an example of how to complete this template. While this template focuses on children and families currently enrolled in your preschool system, this exercise could also be completed with eligible focal population members in your state or community that you would like to focus on enrolling in your preschool system.

Focal population(s) of interest	Level of focus	Total number of focal population members enrolled in your preschool system	Total number of children enrolled in your preschool system	Percentage of focal population members enrolled in your preschool system
<p>Example</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Those experiencing poverty</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Black individuals</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino individuals</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous individuals</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Those with disabilities or developmental delays</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Those in immigrant families</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Multilingual learners</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Child</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Family</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Workforce members</p>	<p><i>5,428 enrolled preschoolers in families earning at or below FPL</i></p>	<p><i>13,256 total enrolled preschoolers</i></p>	<p><i>41%</i></p>
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Application: Identifying focal populations

The three steps I/my team need to do to identify focal populations of interest are...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The three people/agencies I need to reach out to for information regarding focal populations of interest are...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are three concrete actions I/my team can take in the next year to document the experiences and outcomes for focal populations of interest?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.