

## Why Program Assessment Matters

### *For Your Organization*

The program assessment process is an opportunity to identify how to integrate family support and strengthening principles and protective factors into daily operations, practice, training, service delivery, and community-level work. The outcomes of the assessment will guide both newly-established and seasoned programs in achieving the goal of continuous quality improvement. Whether the goal is on strengthening practice, revitalizing a program, re-positioning the organization within the community, or enhancing community and collaborative relationships, program assessment has strategic value for future direction. It can also be a way to communicate the program's progress to funders and identify areas for training and technical assistance.

As you consider which tool to use, reflect on the following questions:

- What is your **motivation** for conducting a program assessment? For example, your intended purpose might be to examine how well your program is embedding protective factors into daily work with families, to address a funding requirement, or to identify areas of operational improvement.
- What are your hoped-for **outcomes** of the assessment process? For example, do you want to focus on how to develop clear strategies for improving quality of practice? Or do you want to identify potential operational changes such as staff development, stakeholder engagement, or policies and procedures to support program structures?
- What is your **focus**? Is it your entire organization, a particular program, or specific area(s) of practice?
- How are you looking at your **organization**? Are you assessing it on its own or in the context of a collaborative or network?
- Are you working to **position** your organization, network or field in a specific way?
- What **resources** and how much **time** do you have to complete your program assessment process? Are you looking at a single point in time, or do you want to develop strategic goals for program improvement measured against the assessment on an ongoing basis?

### *For Funders*

For funders, the program assessment process and tools can lead to a deeper understanding of how well a grantee is integrating and implementing the principles of family support and strengthening and protective factors into its practice with families and communities. Because each tool measures progress on a broad spectrum of quality practices and provides guidance on improvement activities, the assessments may inform the design of funded interventions and oversight processes. In addition to aligning practice across funded programs, other benefits of program assessment include:

- Identifying potential training and technical assistance needs (at both the individual-agency and grantee-network level)
- Fostering the integration of accountability and learning into ongoing practice
- Promoting a culture of learning, which complements other evaluation processes as well as strengthens continuous quality improvement
- Unifying grantees and advancing the field through a common understanding of and measure for quality family support and strengthening practice