



Section 2: QRIS Design Process

Planning or revising a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) includes many decision points. It is important for the process to be handled thoughtfully and with great deliberation. This section includes information on setting the vision and goals, beginning the design or redesign process, determining which programs will participate, and gathering information on the current workforce from the licensing program to inform decisions about the QRIS.

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Establishing a Shared QRIS Vision and Goals

Clearly Defined Vision and Goals

QRIS is a powerful system structure that can organize state efforts aimed at multiple goals. These goals can include strengthening system alignment and finance reform, improving quality in a range of care and education settings, expanding supply, and helping increase demand for high-quality programs. Clearly defining the vision and goals and determining the outcomes or expected results will guide all other design and implementation decisions. It is a critical step in the process of launching or redesigning a QRIS.

The majority of QRIS develop an explicit mission or goals statement that describes their multifaceted, systemic approach. Mission and goal statements may be included in QRIS statutes, policy manuals, and/or websites. Recognizing and improving quality is the most frequently stated goal. Informing parents, policymakers, and the public about quality is also a common goal. QRIS also include goals related to improving children's access to high-quality early care and education and supporting children's positive development and school readiness. Some QRIS note a goal of promoting the education and training of the early care and education workforce. [QRIS Compendium Fact Sheet: Mission and Goal Statements](#) (National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2017) includes several examples of mission and goal statements from QRIS.

It is important for states to articulate clearly the multiple goals and expected outcomes of a QRIS. A theory of change or logic model provides an essential roadmap for a QRIS (Zaslow & Tout, 2014). A theory of change or logic model can help QRIS administrators:

- ◆ communicate clearly with implementation partners and stakeholders to set realistic expectations about activities and outcomes;
- ◆ identify key indicators to track and monitor;
- ◆ develop an evaluation plan; and
- ◆ engage in continuous improvement of the QRIS.

[Quality Rating and Improvement Systems: Stakeholder Theories of Change and Models of Practice](#) (Schilder, Iruka, Dichter, & Mathias, 2015), a resource developed by the BUILD Initiative, provides examples of theories of change and practice models that reflect the state QRIS context.

States may also develop a set of principles that articulate their visions and commitment to children and families through QRIS activities. New Mexico includes its principles within its [Essential Elements of Quality for Center-Based Early Care and Education Programs](#), the quality criteria assessed in FOCUS, the state's third generation QRIS.

Many states develop a QRIS vision and goals with an initial focus on early care and education programs. Later, some states begin developing QRIS standards for school-age programs. At that point, a review of the vision and goals with school-age stakeholders may help ensure that the expanded scope of the QRIS includes the perspective of the school-age field.

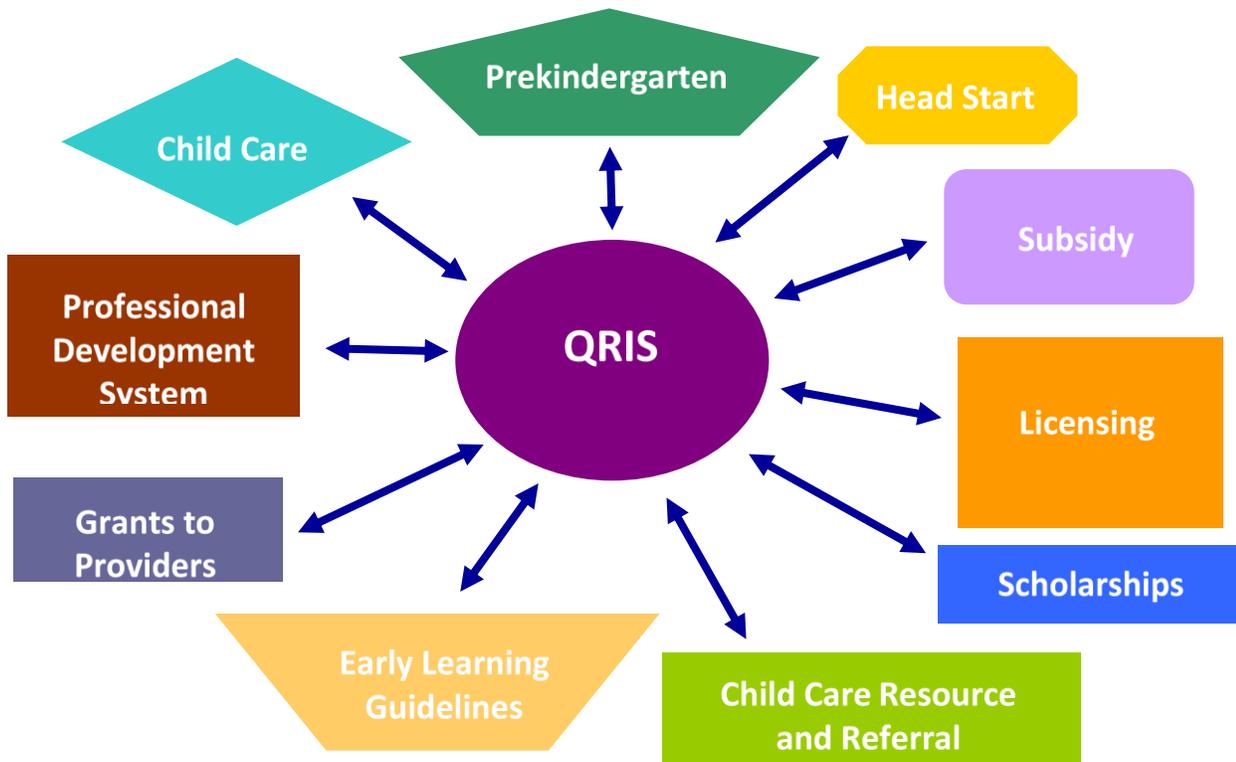
QRIS as a Framework for Quality Improvement Efforts

With a new national emphasis on cross-sector and integrated early and school-age care and education systems, states are using QRIS to link supports for quality improvement into broad and inclusive infrastructures. Doing this provides assurance that investments and supports are tied to standards and a system of accountability. Linking participation in QRIS to access or eligibility for quality improvement supports provides both an incentive for QRIS participation and more targeted quality improvement efforts. A QRIS framework can help states guide system

reform by creating alignment of program standards and requirements and promoting collaboration among each system component. Such reform can make it easier for states to tap multiple and varied funding streams, reduce duplication of efforts, and monitor investment results based on progress toward program quality.

Following is an illustration of early and school-age care and education system linkages. Note that the arrows go in both directions. For example, the professional development system can grow and benefit from the QRIS standards for increased qualifications and training, but it also supports providers so that they can successfully participate in the QRIS.

Figure 1. QRIS System Linkages



The BUILD Initiative (2017) developed the [Tool for a Cross-Sector QRIS](#) to help QRIS planners design (or redesign) a cross-sector QRIS aimed at supporting children’s school readiness and equitable outcomes. The tool includes a self-assessment that planners can use to examine their progress in seven areas: mission, vision, goal, theory of change, and logic model; leadership and governance; financing; stakeholder engagement; standards; QRIS accountability and rating; and improvement supports.

Educating and Building Support among Policymakers and State and Community Leaders

Support from policymakers is key to the success of a statewide QRIS. Although a few states have piloted QRIS with private sector leadership, experience suggests that public support is essential to go to scale and to sustain quality through mixed financing strategies. In many states, public support began with staff in the CCDF Lead Agency. In others, legislators played leadership roles. Regardless of how QRIS begins, public support contributes to long-term success.

Policymakers that can champion the initiative include the governor or lieutenant governor, legislators, state agency directors, and state child care administrators. They are influenced by other state agency staff, the media, the public, and service providers. Several states provided presentations to legislative committees to increase

support and created talking points for advocates to use. If possible, recruitment of legislators with more tenure and influence is advisable. Regardless of whether the QRIS is included in legislation, building legislative awareness and support is important for sustainability.

The following sources can help make a strong case for QRIS:

- ◆ State demographic data that demonstrate the need for early childhood education quality improvement, e.g., the number of licensing violations and complaints, average wages of providers, access to benefits, number of accredited programs.
- ◆ Data on the workforce, e.g., the number of providers by level of education linked with research on child outcomes influenced by provider qualifications.
- ◆ Research on the economic benefits of and return on investment in quality early childhood education.
- ◆ A comparison of how the state's licensing requirements compare to other states' requirements to demonstrate areas that need enhancement, e.g., staff-child ratios, parent involvement, curriculum, administrative policies.
 - Research briefs about trends in child care center, family child care home, and group child care home licensing regulations and policies for 2014. Information products about licensing requirements by the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance are available on the [Protecting Children's Health and Safety](#) web page.
- ◆ A national perspective on how states are using QRIS as a vehicle to improve quality, e.g., research on the impact on quality, testimonials from other state leaders.
 - [Communications Strategies for Expanding QRIS: A Primer for Reaching Policy Audiences](#), from the BUILD Initiative and Child Trends (2017), provides step-by-step guidance on developing a communications strategy for policymakers.

Evaluation data are also important when expanding a QRIS or increasing available financial incentives and supports. If a state has not invested in an evaluation of the program or collected data on its impact, it may be necessary to explain why that information is unavailable, e.g., the cost of research and the lack of resources. Additional information is available in the [Data Collection and Evaluation](#) section.

Educating and Building Support among Private Funders and Businesses

The private sector can offer vital leadership and support for QRIS. In addition to serving as key spokespersons, private sector partners can provide direct financial support, link an existing private sector initiative to QRIS participation, or encourage the public sector to increase funding for the effort. Businesses and employers are likely to deepen their support of QRIS if they understand the impact that quality, reliable child care has on their current and future workforce.

Identifying QRIS advocates and detractors in the state can show that you are intentional about involving them. Some influential advocates (e.g., media, business, philanthropic leaders) can help build support among policymakers and other key stakeholders, so thinking strategically about how and when to use them is advised. Since ill-informed individuals can spread misinformation and seriously undermine the process, states have found that it is better to have detractors at the table where their concerns can be understood and addressed; however, exactly how and when to involve these individuals will vary.

In addition to the BUILD Initiative/Child Trends resource, [Communication Strategies for Expanding QRIS: A Primer for Reaching Policy Audiences](#), the following resources provide strategies on building support with business leaders and others:

- ◆ [Strong Start for Children Toolkit for Early Learning Advocates](#) (2013), from the National Women's Law Center, provides resources for advocates and community leaders to promote early learning.
- ◆ United Way's [Business Champion Toolkit](#) helps state and local United Ways deploy business leaders already committed to early learning as public champions for early childhood education. Materials include speaker and trainer PowerPoint presentations, frequently asked questions, a tip sheet, and a 5-minute video that shows why early learning matters.
- ◆ [Alliance for Early Success](#) provides resources, reports, and tools on advocating for the young.

Launching an effective QRIS is fundamentally about raising public awareness of the importance of high-quality early and school-age care and education and changing behavior regarding how child care choices are made. To this end, it becomes important to engage many partners in spreading the word. The goal becomes encouraging all community leaders and stakeholders to consider QRIS when making decisions about choosing, funding, or monitoring early care and education programs.

Beginning the Design Process

Leading the QRIS Design

Leadership in creating or redesigning a QRIS can come from a variety of sectors, from the legislature or governor's office to state agencies or the private sector. In addition to identifying key stakeholders, part of the initial leadership role is to determine what agency or organization will coordinate and keep the design process moving forward. Administrative support may come from staff in state agencies, privately funded state or community groups, such as the United Way, or from business leaders. Some states have focused on implementation of a statewide system from the start; other QRIS have developed at the community level and provided the foundation for later expansion.

In most states, QRIS initiatives are administered by the agency that administers the CCDF and licensing program. These include state human services, health, education, employment, or early learning agencies. In most states, components of the QRIS, such as technical assistance and program assessment, are often contracted out to private entities. (See the [Quality Assurance and Monitoring](#) section of the QRIS Resource Guide for additional information.)

The most comprehensive QRIS have been supported by entities that are committed to addressing the diversity of programs that serve infants and toddlers, school-age children, children with special or diverse needs, and children in different settings. When evaluating administrative locations, the QRIS designers should consider the following:

- ◆ What agency or organization has an established relationship with the providers that are to be included in the QRIS?
- ◆ Which agency has the staff resources needed to implement a QRIS, e.g., to determine and monitor the rating, to provide or monitor contracts for QRIS support services?
- ◆ What agency or organization has the capacity to effectively use existing and new funding for the QRIS, as well as receive and distribute private dollars, if available?
- ◆ What agency or organization has leadership that is committed to innovation, cross-sector collaboration, building public and political support, and a comprehensive early and school-age care and education system?

Key Partners in the Planning and Design Process

QRIS design and planning committees may be known by different names, e.g., task force, steering committee, advisory committee, or strategic planning workgroup. An existing group, such as a state advisory council, may fill this role, or, if its membership does not include the appropriate stakeholders, a subcommittee or new task force may be named. Whether the design committee has decisionmaking authority or serves in an advisory capacity to an administrative entity should be made clear from the beginning.

Being inclusive from the start can increase support for the QRIS and reduce the potential for misunderstanding and opposition. Mitchell (2005) notes that, “By far, the most successful strategy for increasing support and hearing and addressing concerns is to commit to open planning, design, and implementation processes. State experience shows that closed planning leads to speculation and misconceptions that can spread rapidly, undermining the effort” (p. 15).

A growing trend is to design a QRIS that unites early childhood programs under a common vision of quality that applies to all settings and sectors. In this case, it is important to have those settings (e.g., child care centers, family child care) and sectors (e.g., Head Start, state-funded preschool programs, programs serving young children under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and out-of-school time programs) represented from the beginning. It is helpful to recruit people who can speak for their agencies or constituencies and who have the authority to make decisions and contribute resources, or have access to managers who carry such authority. More influential members can extend an invitation to others and help ensure that all needed stakeholders are involved.

It is critical for participants in the process to understand their role in the planning and design phase, as well as their potential role in implementation of the QRIS. At a minimum, it helps to begin the planning and design phase with a clear designation of which entities have lines of authority for funding and operating the QRIS, and, therefore, final decisionmaking responsibility. It has also become clear from evaluations of national systems-building initiatives that authentic involvement of parents, clients, and program staff assures both buy-in and successful implementation.

The initial QRIS design committee might include representatives from the following organizations:

- ◆ State agency implementing child care quality initiatives;
- ◆ State subsidy agency;
- ◆ State licensing agency;
- ◆ State education agency;
- ◆ State department of education’s Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program;
- ◆ State agency overseeing prekindergarten programs;
- ◆ State early intervention programs (Parts B and C);
- ◆ State Early Learning Advisory Council;
- ◆ Providers, possibly through their professional associations and inclusive of infant-toddler and school-age programs;
- ◆ Parents and organizations that represent parents;
- ◆ State Head Start Collaboration Project and Head Start Association;
- ◆ State professional development council;
- ◆ Child care resource and referral agencies;

- ◆ Organizations or initiatives that focus on specific populations or issues, e.g., infant mental health, family support, children with special needs;
- ◆ Statewide afterschool networks;
- ◆ State legislative leadership from both political parties;
- ◆ Governor's office;
- ◆ Foundations and business leaders with an interest in early childhood education;
- ◆ Vocational-technical schools;
- ◆ Higher education institutions;
- ◆ State leaders with an interest in the intersection of early care and education with health, mental health, early intervention, and parent support;
- ◆ Tribal child care;
- ◆ United Way, child advocacy organizations, and other groups working on early care and education in communities;
- ◆ Researchers and other child development experts; and
- ◆ Other partners that can contribute expertise or potential funding.

Strategic Planning

Many state design committees guided the planning and development of a long-range strategic plan to help organize the process and track progress. Although some flexibility is necessary, timeframes in a strategic plan can keep the work moving forward when a window of opportunity exists.

QRIS are complex systems with many decision points that will significantly impact the future direction and funding priorities for a state system. Strategic planning should include identification of all programs and resources that can support the initiative, plus the identification of existing gaps in resources. Design committee members have their own priorities and strongly held beliefs. Some states have benefited from a chairperson who is skilled in directing and managing this type of process and who can guide an agreed upon decisionmaking procedure. It is often helpful to obtain the services of a trained facilitator to ensure that all members view the process as positive and respectful.

The development of a new statewide QRIS is enhanced by a detailed and thoughtful analysis of all aspects of the state's current early and school-age care and education system, as well as a review of national resources and other states' systems. The [Quality Compendium](#) provides profiles and detailed information of each QRIS in the United States.¹ QRIS features can be compared within a state or across multiple states. Links to QRIS websites are also available in the Compendium.

It may be helpful to assign various sections of the plan to subcommittees or staff who can report to the entire group. Subcommittees can include additional members with specific expertise in the areas being discussed. Focus groups of various constituencies, such as family child care home providers or parents, may ensure that the concerns of people most affected can be heard.

¹ The "Quality Compendium" was previously named the "QRIS Compendium". The *QRIS Resource Guide* refers to the compendium using both names.

Statutory and Administrative Authority

In some states, the QRIS is created through legislation; in others, a state agency or private entity initiates the program. The approach chosen by a state depends on several factors, including the state's needs, system goals, system type, and the state's political context. In a rated license system, each rated license is a property right that requires an appeal process to revoke, requiring statutory language. For states where the QRIS was created through state statute, e.g., **Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee**, there is a legal mandate to create and maintain the initiative as well as the possibility of state funding. Because the specific QRIS policies and standards will be revised over time, states have intentionally limited the amount of implementation language included in statutes. Each approach has advantages, but the choice depends more on the leadership and opportunities in a state than on any other considerations.

The advantage to QRIS through agency administrative rules is that there is generally more flexibility because changes may be easier to make, depending on the state's administrative procedures process. The advantages to QRIS through legislation is that it provides greater longevity when political or agency champions leave their positions, and it increases the possibility that state funding will grow over time. The following are challenges to QRIS in legislation:

- ◆ If an attempt to get QRIS legislation passed is not successful, agencies are sometimes prohibited from proceeding with a similar policy effort.
- ◆ There is often legislative opposition to new regulations placed on businesses. There may also be opposition from child care providers or other sectors (e.g., public schools, nursing homes) that may fear that a rating process could be applied to them in the future.
- ◆ Legislation needs to be carefully written to allow for future changes in standards and policies without having to revise the law.

Timeframe for Development

The QRIS design process often takes at least a year of intensive work to develop recommendations on all aspects of the system. In several states, it has taken far longer. QRIS planning may include operating pilots or field tests, developing cost projections (initial and revised), cultivating support, and securing funding. Over time, evaluation data, new research, changing funding levels, and lessons learned by other states can be used to inform periodic QRIS modifications.

Determining Participation

Identifying Eligible Early Childhood Programs

The goals of a QRIS will influence which programs are included. Although challenges to including all early and school-age care and education providers exist, a unifying, cross-system QRIS provides an excellent opportunity to link programs and resources into a more cohesive infrastructure. This also helps parents assess a wide range of program options. Almost all states include regulated child care centers and family child care homes, although sometimes states may implement just center-based care with a plan to expand to additional types of providers later.

Alternative Pathways

Operating as a licensed program is often, but not always, a prerequisite for participation in a QRIS. Some states have created an alternative QRIS pathway for providers that are not required to be licensed but that seek to

participate. The providers that fall into this category vary by state and may include school-age programs, faith-based programs, part-day nursery schools, prekindergarten programs, school-sponsored early childhood programs, and others. Some of these alternative pathways include the following:

- ◆ **Arkansas'** Better Beginnings allows registered family child care homes (a voluntary status for home providers caring for 5 or fewer children) to participate at level one with no additional requirements. To achieve level two, they must meet the staff-child ratios in minimum licensing requirements, and at level three, family child care homes must be licensed.
- ◆ **Delaware's** professional development system supports QRIS in a cross-sector model, including the special education initiatives in the state. Inclusion is supported through technical assistance and quality improvement plans.
- ◆ **Indiana** allows license-exempt registered ministries to enroll in its QRIS by becoming licensed or choosing voluntary certification.
- ◆ **New York's** pilot QRIS included "any program regulated by the state of New York or the city of New York," which would include child care centers in New York City (NYC) that are required to be licensed, family child care homes and child care centers regulated by the Office of Children and Family Services, preschools outside NYC that are registered with the state Department of Education, and public school prekindergarten programs that are regulated by the state Department of Education.
- ◆ **Pennsylvania** has developed an accreditation crosswalk template for use by other nationally recognized programs such as Head Start and accredited programs such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The template helps determine the level of alignment between Keystone STARS (the QRIS) and the program or accreditation standards. Stakeholders can identify gaps and use a differentiated designation process so that only those items not demonstrated by the program or accreditation process are reviewed by Keystone STARS.
- ◆ **Pennsylvania** Pre-K Counts, the state-funded prekindergarten program in Pennsylvania, requires that all classrooms meet standards that are similar to and aligned with the Keystone STARS standards, such as achieving a particular score on an environment rating scale assessment. After a phase-in period across provider types, all Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms must now have teachers who hold early childhood education teacher certifications.

A strategy in designing a cross-sector QRIS is to align or incorporate other sets of program standards into the QRIS standards, such as the Head Start Performance Standards, accreditation, and prekindergarten standards. For example, in **Minnesota's** QRIS, Head Start programs are automatically eligible for four stars, while state prekindergarten programs and nationally accredited programs are offered an accelerated pathway to four-star status. **Maine** has a separate track and QRIS standards specifically for Head Start programs. **Oklahoma** does not require accredited programs to have an environment rating scale (ERS) assessment, and Head Start programs can use their Classroom Assessment Scoring System assessment in lieu of the ERS. Additional information is available in the [Standards and Criteria](#) section of the QRIS Resource Guide.

License-Exempt Programs

A number of states exempt certain types of programs from licensing requirements. Common types of license-exempt programs include programs operated by public schools, recreation and drop-in programs, and programs operating for limited hours per day or weeks per year. Some states choose to exempt programs from a subset of requirements only; for example, school-based programs may be exempt from facility requirements. In most states, license-exempt school-age programs are required to voluntarily become licensed to enter a QRIS, which may be a barrier that keeps some providers from participating. For a QRIS to be feasible as a way to improve quality in a range of settings, states may consider addressing this challenge through a number of strategies:

- ◆ Provide outreach and technical assistance to exempt programs to demonstrate the value of the QRIS and help them become licensed;

- ◆ Develop an alternative process to licensing, such as registration, so that license-exempt providers give basic information to the state and can participate in the QRIS; and
- ◆ Allow school-based, license-exempt programs that meet health and safety requirements through the state department of education to participate.

Most states do not include family, friend, and neighbor care in their QRIS because they are generally license-exempt and experience high turnover rates. However, states are not precluded from offering recognition and incentives specifically targeted toward this population. In **Illinois**, publicly funded, license-exempt, home-based providers receive up to three tiers of training award certificates. They also receive quality add-ons based on the amount of state-offered training they have received.

Tribal Programs

In 1998, tribes were involved in the planning and implementation of **Oklahoma's** statewide QRIS Reaching for the Stars. Many tribal child care programs currently participate in Reaching for the Stars. Licensing is a requirement of the QRIS, and tribal programs can be licensed through the state or tribe. Through the Oklahoma Tribal-State Child Care Network, QRIS managers meet with tribal CCDF administrators on a quarterly basis to share updates and resolve any issues. During the initial launch of the state of **Washington's** QRIS Early Achievers, 7 out of 22 tribal centers chose to participate. Nationally, many tribes have chosen to participate in their states' QRIS while others are exploring the possibility of developing QRIS for their states' tribal CCDF grantees. [Tribal Child Care: Exploring QRIS](#) (National Center on Tribal Child Care Implementation and Innovation, 2013) provide tribes with an overview of QRIS.

Unfortunately, fiscal realities may also influence which providers are allowed or encouraged to participate in QRIS. After decisions are made on which types of providers should be included, cost projections for the numbers of providers and at what level they will enter the system may determine whether the QRIS needs to be phased in over time. Additional information is available in the [Cost Projections and Financing](#) section of the QRIS Resource Guide.

Voluntary Versus Mandatory Participation

Participation in most state QRIS is voluntary. When participation is optional, the QRIS often receives less opposition, and it may be more manageable to implement on a limited basis. On the other hand, mandatory participation by a significant number of the state's early and school-age care and education providers allows the QRIS to be more effective in empowering parents as consumers and improving the overall quality of services. Many states have strategically linked the QRIS to licensing in a way that engages all providers required to be licensed. For example, quite a few states craft QRIS standards so that all licensed programs are automatically placed at the first level. Thus, all licensed providers can easily participate in the system at least at level one; movement to a higher level is optional and requires that the provider demonstrate compliance with the standards at higher quality levels. This approach ensures that consumers can access ratings for most, if not all, programs. Full participation by all eligible providers at some level increases the credibility and legitimacy of the system.

In several states (**Colorado, District of Columbia, Maryland**), state-funded prekindergarten programs are encouraged to participate in QRIS. In **Vermont** they are required to be licensed and participate in the QRIS. In **North Carolina**, public school prekindergarten programs are required to become licensed and participate in QRIS at a four or five star level in order to receive state prekindergarten funding.

Some states make QRIS a requirement for public funding, including participation in the child care subsidy system. A Policy Interpretation Question ([CCDF-ACF-PIQ-2011-01](#)) issued by the Office of Child Care in 2011 explains that although parents receiving subsidies must be able to choose their child care provider, states can require providers who are paid with CCDF to meet quality requirements or standards, such as a QRIS rating level. However, parents receiving subsidies must continue to be allowed to choose from a range of child care providers

(center-based, group home, family child care, and inhome care) and types of care (nonprofit, for-profit, sectarian providers, and relatives who provide care).

- ◆ **Oklahoma** requires licensed child care centers to meet the one star plus level or higher in the QRIS to contract for the care of children receiving child care assistance. Family child care homes must be on a permit and one star plus or higher to obtain a contract. However, once family child care homes are licensed, they may be at the one star level to receive child care assistance payments. Participation in the QRIS beyond the one star level is voluntary.
- ◆ **New Mexico** requires all licensed child care programs receiving child care assistance to meet the two-star level requirements. Basic licensure includes one-star and two-star requirements of the FOCUS on Young Children's Learning QRIS. Star level two is voluntary for providers who do not accept child care assistance. Star levels three, four, and five are voluntary for all licensed child care providers. Registered home child care providers receiving child care assistance are not required to participate in the QRIS.
- ◆ Participation in **Maine's** QRIS (Quality for ME) is mandated for any licensed provider receiving child care assistance payments. Head Start programs are also required to join Quality for ME.
- ◆ In **Wisconsin**, participation in the QRIS is mandatory for child care programs that receive child care assistance through the Wisconsin Shares Program. Participation is voluntary for all other regulated child care programs. Providers receiving child care assistance payments must be at a two-star or higher rating. Programs receiving a two-star rating receive a 5 percent reduction in rates. Providers receive the base child care assistance rate at three stars. Programs that receive a four-star rating receive an increase of 10 percent, and programs that receive a five-star rating receive a 25 percent increase in tiered reimbursement rate.
- ◆ **North Carolina** requires all licensed child care programs receiving child care assistance to meet the three- to five-star license level. Basic licensure is at the one-star level, but programs can ask to be assessed for a higher level of license (two to five stars). State legislation passed in 2011 mandates limiting child care assistance payments to the higher quality programs. It also allows for exemptions where there are inadequate child care slots available at the higher star levels.

In states that link public funding to QRIS level, private-sector funders, such as the United Way, may follow suit and require the providers that they fund to participate as well. In that case, participation is technically voluntary, but it is required if the program wants to receive third-party funding.

Mapping the Early and School-Age Care and Education Workforce

Using Data to Inform Planning

QRIS planning is strengthened by data, especially when determining QRIS standards and criteria and projecting costs. It is helpful to collect as much information as possible on the number, type, and quality level of early and school-age care and education programs, the ages of children served in various settings, the educational qualifications of the practitioners, and available resources in the state. These data can be used to inform planners on the possible number of participants and assess the need for supports, such as scholarships, to help practitioners achieve higher levels of education to meet the QRIS standards. (The [Provider Cost of Quality Calculator](#) is described in the [Cost Projections and Financing](#) section of the QRIS Resource Guide.) These data can be derived from a wide range of sources, including the state's social services department, education department, regional Head Start office, child care resource and referral (CCR&R) network, and others. Many states have also conducted early care and education economic impact studies that include helpful data. A searchable database of studies is available through Cornell University's [Restructuring Local Government](#) website. The number of nationally accredited programs in a state can be determined by going to the accrediting

organizations' websites. Additional information about accreditation as a QRIS standard is available in the [Standards and Criteria](#) section of this guide.

Workforce Demographics

Studying the demographics of the workforce provides valuable information for the identification of QRIS standards that can move the profession forward but can also be attainable for most providers. These data also allow for more accurate cost projections.

Although several state licensing programs maintain workforce data, the most likely place to obtain state-specific data is from a professional development registry or a workforce study. More than 30 states have registries, and a map with links to the state registries is available on [The National Workforce Registry Alliance](#) website. Although most states do not mandate participation, registries may still provide helpful data if a representative sample of the workforce is included. The following are some other potential sources of data:

- ◆ CCR&R databases;
- ◆ Expanded market rate surveys that include questions on the workforce;
- ◆ Provider surveys of training supply and demand;
- ◆ Head Start's Program Information Report data;
- ◆ State department of education teacher data;
- ◆ Higher education data on students studying early childhood education or child development; and
- ◆ State employment and labor agencies.

If state-specific data are not available or are limited in applicability, national data can be helpful.

Licensing Data

Licensing databases can be a valuable source of information for projecting participation at each QRIS level. These databases will vary significantly in both the data elements collected and the ability to access the data and generate reports. At a minimum, the number of licensed programs by category can be determined. Some databases may also include staff qualification and training information. More advanced systems can identify how many programs would be able to meet the standard on licensing compliance (i.e., operating in good standing on a full license, no serious noncompliance or substantiated complaints).

[A Guide to Support States and Territories' Use of Child Care Licensing Data](#) (National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2017) can help CCDF and licensing administrators assess current licensing data systems and identify needed changes. It explores new uses for licensing data, examines some strategies for dealing with common challenges, and provides additional resources for review and reference.

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