7 Support Continuous Quality Improvement

Lead Agencies are required to reserve and use a portion of their Child Care and Development Block Grant funds for activities designed to improve the quality of child care services and increase parental options for, and access to, high-quality child care. Support for continuous quality improvement is expected to cover the entire age span of children supported by CCDF, from birth through age 12. States/Territories may provide these quality improvement activities directly, or through grants or contracts with local child care resource and referral organizations or other appropriate entities. The activities should be in alignment with a State/Territory-wide assessment of the State’s/Territory’s needs to carry out such services and care. These quality investments can align with, support and help sustain additional quality efforts developed under Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants, Early Head Start/Head Start partnerships and other funding efforts.

States and Territories will report on these quality improvement investments through CCDF in three ways: 1) ACF will collect annual data on how much CCDF funding is spent on quality activities using the expenditure report (ACF-696); 2) In the Plan, States and Territories will describe the types of activities supported by quality investments over the three-year period; and 3) For each three-year Plan period, States and Territories will submit a separate annual report that will show the measures used by the State/Territory to evaluate its progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires States and Territories to use the quality set-aside to fund at least one of the following 10 activities:

1) Supporting the training and professional development of the child care workforce (as described in Section 6)
2) Improving on the development or implementation of early learning and development guidelines (as described in Section 6)
3) Developing, implementing, or enhancing a tiered quality rating system for child care providers and services
4) Improving the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers
5) Establishing or expanding a Statewide system of child care resource and referral services (as described Section 1)
6) Supporting compliance with State/Territory requirements for licensing, inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety (as described in Section 5)
7) Evaluating the quality of child care programs in the State/Territory, including evaluating how programs positively impact children
8) Supporting providers in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation
9) Supporting the development or adoption of high-quality program standards related to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development

10) Other activities to improve the quality of child care services as long as outcome measures relating to improved provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or kindergarten-entry are possible.

Throughout this Plan, States and Territories will describe the types of quality improvement activities where CCDF investments are being made, including but not limited to, the quality set-aside funds. We recognize that for some areas, States and Territories may leverage other funds to support the quality improvement goals, which we encourage and support. For example, activities related to early learning and development guidelines may be supported by a combination of CCDF and education funding. States and Territories continue to have such flexibility.

7.1 Activities to Improve the Quality of Child Care Services

7.1.1 What are your overarching goals for quality improvement? Please describe how the State/Territory selected these goals, including any data or the State/Territory-wide assessment of needs that identified the needs for quality improvement services

Oregon has identified specific objectives for quality improvement in order to meet key outcomes for all children entering kindergarten. Through work with the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant and statewide goals from the Governor’s office regarding early learning, all children enter kindergarten with the necessary skills, experiences, and supports to succeed; families are stable and attached and have the information and support they need to nurture and prepare their children for school; and all early learning services occur within a coordinated and aligned system. This effort is extended through programs serving school age children in before and after school programs. Through application of the Oregon Equity Lens, the strategies have been honed so that supported and monitored programs are continuously improving, with resources and investments targeted to children furthest from opportunity. For example, focused family child care networks are being established across the state targeting providers serving racially and ethnically diverse children and children experiencing poverty. Child Care Resource and Referral agencies have been directed to focus their outreach to this population of providers as well.

7.1.2 Check and describe which of the following specified quality improvement activities the State/Territory is investing in:

- Developing, implementing or enhancing a tiered quality rating system. If checked, respond to 7.2.

- Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality set-aside**
Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) Race to the Top, Child Care Tax Credit contributions

Improving the supply and quality of child care services for infants and toddlers. If checked, respond to 7.3.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, including whether designated infant- and toddler set aside, etc.) funds are being used along with other CCDF funds

Special populations subsidy regarding Teen Parent Programs

Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.)

Establishing or expanding a statewide system of CCR&R services as discussed in 1.7. If checked, respond to 7.4.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) Quality Set aside

- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) Race to the Top

Facilitating compliance with State/Territory requirements for inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety standards (as described in Section 5). If checked, respond to 7.5.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) CCDF Discretionary funds

- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) State General Fund

Evaluating and assessing the quality and effectiveness of child care services within the State/Territory. If checked, respond to 7.6.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)
☐ CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) *Quality set-aside*

☐ Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) *Race to the Top*

☐ Supporting accreditation. If checked, respond to 7.7.

☐ Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

☐ CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) ______

☐ Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) ______

☐ Supporting State/Territory or local efforts to develop high-quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development. If checked, respond to 7.8.

☐ Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

☐ CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) ______

☐ Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) *Race to the Top*

☐ Other activities determined by the State/Territory to improve the quality of child care services, and for which measurement of outcomes related to improved provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or entry into kindergarten is possible. If checked, respond to 7.9.

☐ Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

☐ CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) *Quality set aside*

☐ Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) *Race to the Top, State General Fund*
7.2  Quality Rating and Improvement System

7.2.1  Does your State/Territory have a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS)?

☑  Yes, the State/Territory has a QRIS operating State/Territory-wide. Describe how the QRIS is administered (e.g., state or locally administered such as through CCR&Rs) and provide a link, if available

*The QRIS is a statewide program administered through several contracting agencies. The support component is administered primarily through the CCR&Rs. The standards, monitoring, program incentives, and process are administered through Western Oregon University. The professional development system and workforce incentives are administered through Portland State University.*  [http://triwou.org/projects/qris](http://triwou.org/projects/qris)

☐  Yes, the State/Territory has a QRIS operating as a pilot, in a few localities, or only a few levels but not fully operating State/Territory-wide. Provide a link, if available ______

☐  No, but the State/Territory is in the development phase

☐  No, the State/Territory has no plans for development

a) If yes, check all that apply to your QRIS.

☑  Participation is voluntary

☐  Participation is mandatory for providers serving children receiving subsidy. If checked, describe the relationship between QRIS participation and subsidy (minimum rating required, participation at any level, etc.) ______

☐  Participation is required for all providers

☐  Includes nationally-recognized accreditation as a way to meet/achieve QRIS rating levels

☑  Supports and assesses the quality of child care providers in the State/Territory

☐  Builds on State/Territory licensing standards and other State/Territory regulatory standards for such providers

☑  Embeds licensing into the QRIS. Describe *Licensing is the first tier of the QRIS.*

☑  Designed to improve the quality of different types of child care providers and services

☑  Describes the safety of child care facilities

☑  Addresses the business practices of programs

☑  Builds the capacity of State/Territory early childhood programs and communities to promote parents’ and families’ understanding of the State/Territory’s early childhood system and the ratings of the programs in which the child is enrolled
Provides, to the maximum extent practicable, financial incentives and other supports designed to expand the full diversity of child care options and help child care providers improve the quality of services. If checked, please describe how these financial options link to responses in Section 4.3 related to higher payment rates tied to quality.

Oregon will be implementing tiered reimbursement systems to supply bonus payments to providers serving children on subsidy. This was approved during the 2015 legislative session and will be implemented summer or fall 2016.

Can be used to track trends in whether children receiving subsidy are utilizing rated care settings and level of rating.

b) If yes, which types of settings or distinctive approaches to early childhood education and care participate in the State’s/Territory’s QRIS? Check all that apply.

- [ ] Licensed child care centers
- [ ] Licensed family child care homes
- [ ] License-exempt providers
- [ ] Early Head Start programs
- [ ] Head Start programs
- [ ] State pre-kindergarten or preschool program
- [ ] Local district supported pre-kindergarten programs
- [ ] Programs serving infants and toddlers
- [ ] Programs serving school-age children
- [ ] Faith-based settings
- [ ] Other. Describe.

Accredited programs: Oregon has worked with national and statewide accredited programs to create a crosswalk of the accreditation standards with QRIS standards. The crosswalks are meant to honor the work, improvements, and standards that the programs have achieved through other accreditation to help facilitate participation and success on the QRIS.
7.2.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory.

Oregon tracks QRIS participation by type of setting, geographic, workforce and subsidy child level ethnicity data, CLASS assessment scores, family engagement, and child engagement. Oregon has invested in specific, targeted technical assistance around ensuring participation of a diversity of settings, including accredited programs, Head Start, Oregon Prekindergarten, and school age programs. Oregon has a validation study and a process evaluation occurring which will measure the impact of the QRIS including the components listed above. In addition, through the Race to the Top grant, Oregon is working on revisions to the QRIS standards, processes, and supports and incentives.

7.3 Improving the Supply and Quality of Child Care Programs and Services for Infants and Toddlers

The CCDBG Act of 2014 included changes targeted at improving the supply and quality of infant-toddler care. Lead Agencies are encouraged to systematically assess and improve the overall quality of care infants and toddlers receive, the systems in place or needed to support and enhance the quality of infant and toddler providers and the capacity of the infant and toddler workforce to meet the unique needs of very young children, and the methods in place to increase the proportion of infants and toddlers in higher quality care.

7.3.1 What activities are being implemented by the State/Territory to improve the supply (see also section 4) and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers? Check all that apply and describe.

- Establishing or expanding high-quality community or neighborhood-based family and child development centers, which may serve as resources to child care providers in order to improve the quality of early childhood services provided to infants and toddlers from low-income families and to help eligible child care providers improve their capacity to offer high-quality, age-appropriate care to infants and toddlers from low-income families. Describe:

  *Oregon has invested in Teen Parent/Child Development programs located in public high schools and community-based organizations (CBO) since 1991. Although publicly administered child care centers are exempt from regulation, school or CBO-based child care centers participating in the Teen Parent program must be licensed and meet Teen Parent/Child Development program standards established by the Oregon Department of Education.*

- Establishing or expanding the operation of community or neighborhood-based family child care networks. Describe:

  *Oregon is investing in focused family child care networks across the state over the next several years. Each community has identified targeted neighborhood or populations in which to encourage participation of providers serving children furthest from opportunity*
in those communities. Participating programs receive enhanced technical assistance and support funds.

- Providing training and professional development to promote and expand child care providers’ ability to provide developmentally appropriate services for infants and toddlers. Describe:

  Oregon’s professional development system includes training on infant and toddler development and care. Oregon’s QRIS specifically requires addressing the needs of infant and toddlers including environment, curricula, and adult child interaction.

- Providing financial incentives (including the use of grants and contracts as discussed in section 4) to increase the supply and quality of infant-toddler care. Describe ______

- Providing coaching and/or technical assistance on this age group’s unique needs from Statewide networks of qualified infant-toddler specialists. Describe ______

- Coordinating with early intervention specialists who provide services for infants and toddlers with disabilities under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.) Describe ______

- Developing infant and toddler components within the State’s/Territory’s QRIS. Describe ______

- Developing infant and toddler components within the State/Territory’s child care licensing regulations. Describe ______

- Developing infant and toddler components within the early learning and development guidelines. Describe ______

- Improving the ability of parents to access transparent and easy to understand consumer information about high-quality infant and toddler care. Describe:

  Through Oregon’s QRIS and the CCDBG Act of 2014, parents will have greatly increased access to information on quality rating of programs as well as more details about complaints, monitoring and non-compliance. The information will be accessed through websites and child care referral services and search tools.

- Carrying out other activities determined by the State/Territory to improve the quality of infant and toddler care provided in the State/Territory, and for which there is evidence that the activities will lead to improved infant and toddler health and safety, infant and toddler cognitive and physical development, or infant and toddler well-being. Describe:

  Four Oregon grantees were recently awarded funds to create new Early Head Start-Child Care partnerships. Working closely with the Head Start Collaboration Director, the goals of this project are to enhance and support early learning settings to provide full-day, full-year comprehensive services that meet the needs of low income working families, to enhance access to high quality, full-time child care, to support the development of
infants and toddlers through strong relationship-based experiences and to prepare infants and toddlers for the transition into preschool.

☑ Other. Describe

*Oregon provides financial incentives to providers caring for infants/toddlers of families receiving child care assistance. Providers receive higher rate payments for obtaining additional infant/toddler training beyond what is required for health and safety requirements.*

7.3.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory

*Through performance based contracts and federal monitoring of the Early Head Start-Child Care partnership grants, multiple data points are available to determine how these activities are faring.*

7.4 Child Care Resource & Referral

7.4.1 Describe the status of the child care resource and referral system (as discussed in Section 1.7)

☑ State/Territory has a CCR&R system operating State/Territory-wide. Describe how the CCR&R system is operated, including how many agencies and if there is a statewide network and how the system is coordinated and if its voluntary ______

*The Early Learning Division contracts directly with 12 regional CCR&R programs through performance based contracts. There is a Central Coordination contract at Western Oregon University to provide leadership and technical assistance for CCR&R programs.*

☐ State/Territory has a CCR&R system operating in a few localities but not fully operating State/Territory-wide. Describe ______

☐ State/Territory is in the development phase

7.4.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory

*Oregon’s CCRR system continues to improve and evolves to focus on targeted improvement of child care programs through concrete, consistent, improved systems. For example, the QRIS has provided a clear framework for supporting the improvement in licensed programs. The CCRRs are the core partners for providing quality improvement supports in Oregon’s QRIS. Each CCRR, through outcome based contracts, has measures including QRIS participation and increase provider professional development milestones to measure quality improvement.*

7.5 Facilitating Compliance with State Standards
7.5.1 What strategies does your State/Territory fund with CCDF quality funds to facilitate child care providers’ compliance with State/Territory requirements for inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety, and with State/Territory licensing standards? Describe _____

Oregon’s licensing compliance and monitoring are integrated to Oregon’s QRIS system. The QRIS has a foundation in licensing, with licensing being the first tier of the QRIS. From there, programs are required to maintain specific, increasing compliance requirements in order to move up on the tiers. Additionally, Oregon is piloting the research based differential monitoring system in order to allocate more resources to programs that need more technical assistance to comply.

7.5.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory.

Oregon has specific compliance criteria for programs to be eligible for the QRIS tiers as well as eligibility for differential monitoring. During the field testing of both systems, data is kept to assess programs’ success at meeting the eligibility. In addition, a validation study on the QRIS tracks which components of the QRIS programs are meeting or not.

7.6 Evaluating and Assessing the Quality and Effectiveness of Child Care Programs and Services

7.6.1 One of the purposes of the CCDBG Act of 2014 is to increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care settings. Describe how the State/Territory measures the quality and effectiveness of child care programs and services offered in the State/Territory, including any tools used to measure child, family, teacher, classroom, or provider improvements, and how the State/Territory evaluates that such programs positively impact children _____

Using the QRIS as a framework, Oregon now has a consistent way to evaluate quality of programs. With the ongoing Validation Study and Process evaluation, Oregon has the ability to make continuous quality improvements to its QRIS. Throughout the QRIS and its related studies, there are measures including Family Surveys, child screening and assessments, CLASS assessments of adult-child interaction in settings, family and child engagement measures, as well as a professional development registry with 12 steps of achievement in professional development.

7.6.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory _____

The QRIS validation study and process evaluations provide specific evaluations of the quality and effectiveness of the programs through the tools described above.
7.7 Accreditation Support

7.7.1 Does the State/Territory support child care providers in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation by a national accrediting body with demonstrated, valid, and reliable program standards of high quality?

☐ Yes, the State/Territory has supports operating State/Territory-wide. Describe the supports for all types of accreditation the State/Territory provides to child care centers and family child care homes to achieve accreditation ______

☐ Yes, the State/Territory has supports operating as a pilot or in a few localities but not State/Territory-wide. Describe ______

☐ No, but the State/Territory is in the development phase

☒ No, the State/Territory has no plans for development

7.7.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory ______

7.8 Program Standards

7.8.1 What other State/Territory or local efforts, if any, is the State/Territory supporting to develop or adopt high-quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development? Please describe

Oregon has adopted programs standards through its QRIS. With input from stakeholders and specific content experts, the standards have been created which address specific health domains around nutrition, health education, physical activity, and gross motor activities. In addition, the social-emotional component is a priority for Oregon as evidenced through its investment in the adult child interaction standard. Oregon requires an on-site CLASS assessment of adult child interaction for its top rated programs. Oregon is also engaging in a revision process, seeking additional input from specific stakeholders to improve the QRIS and help ensure that via the equity lens Oregon is serving children from diverse communities.

7.8.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory

The Validation Study is measuring how the program standards differentiate programs according to tiers. The results of the study, as well as other factors, will determine the need to restructure the standards. In addition, Oregon has plans to create ongoing feedback on the standards through an equity lens to ensure that the programs benefiting children are culturally relevant. Oregon will be convening additional community engagement sessions with diverse populations and seeking specific input on its standards.

7.9 Other Quality Improvement Activities
List and describe any other activities the State/Territory provides to improve the quality of child care services and describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or entry into kindergarten. 

Oregon has other projects to improve and support the quality of programs. For example, Oregon continues its use of contracted slots programs to serve low income families. The contracted slots provide greater consistence and stability for children and their working parents while supporting the programs to provide consistent, high quality care. Oregon will begin tiered reimbursement as well as implement longer eligibility protocols to increase continuity in high quality care.

Oregon invests through contracts with specific special populations, including providers that serve migrant seasonal farmworker families, teen parents, parents in residential drug and alcohol treatment, and programs serving children with special needs. Not only are there financial subsidies to support the programs in serving these families, but there is targeted quality improvement funds and technical assistance to these programs for quality improvement.

Oregon is also piloting support of the Teaching Strategies Gold as quality improvement, providing training and technology for programs to use this child assessment.

Oregon has passed legislation for “Preschool Promise”, that expands Oregon’s ability to equitably serve children with low incomes in quality early learning settings. Preschool Promise expands Oregon’s funded prekindergarten programs to serve preschool age children in a variety of settings (e.g., child care centers, family child care homes) that meet specific quality and personnel requirements while seeking to increase the numbers of highly qualified, culturally responsive early learning settings.

Finally and perhaps most important, Oregon has adopted an equity lens for all of its education work. Within quality improvement, Oregon has specific plans to work and lead with diverse populations and authentic stakeholder engagement and input/impact ongoing.