

## Technical Proposal

### Environmental Community Scan:

Describe your organization's ability to conduct environmental scans across multiple domains of the community to identify resources already in place that would facilitate the QRIS implementation as well as identify community resources needed. In your description, please address available resources and your organization's ability to assess each of the below aspects:

a. Parents: Describe what is in place in your community to provide information to parents about early learning opportunities.

Virtually all parents whose children are born in hospitals and birthing centers receive developmental charts and other useful parenting information at "just in time" intervals through the state's Child Profile mailings. Additionally, parents can access Parent Help 123 for program eligibility information as well as other online information from Within Reach, child care resource and referral organizations and other early learning organizations.

In January 2008, Thrive by Five will launch a Parent and Community Awareness Campaign, which will be field-tested in White Center and East Yakima. Components of this campaign, including methods of communications, will promote the effort to improve the quality of child care as well as increase parents' understanding of what to look for in regards to quality. The campaign will include enhanced web content and interactive features on the [www.thrivebyfivewa.org](http://www.thrivebyfivewa.org) website as well as placement of messages and information in community



#### 4. Describe how you will ensure parent leadership in planning activities (e.g. Parent Advisory Group)

From early on, the planning in this community effort has engaged families who will be served by enhanced services. The effort in White Center has built upon many years of work done by Making Connections, an effort sponsored by the Annie E Casey Foundation. Through this effort, parents in the community have participated in formal and informal planning efforts. In November 2006, a community summit simultaneously translated into several languages was attended by 490 adults and 275 children. A core group of parents involved in this event continue their commitment to the implementation of the early learning initiative. A Community Advisory Committee was established as part of the planning process for the early learning initiative. This committee is comprised of parents and other residents that are committed to preparing young children for school and life. This committee will continue to meet and advise on the programs, services and activities that are implemented including the quality improvement system for childcare.

##### b. Educators and Early Learning Programs:

1. List all early learning programs (and educators within these programs) in your community within the following categories: licensed (e.g., child care centers and family child care homes), state regulated (e.g., Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, ECEAP), federally regulated (e.g., Head Start, Early Head Start), Exempt (e.g., offer 3 ½ hours or less of care per day)

Local staff from state agencies have participated in a variety of planning sessions about the community initiative and will be welcome to continue to provide useful information and support to this effort. Our partner, the Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCRRN) and the local resource and referral organization, CCR have extensive data detailing current child care providers in this area which can be enhanced as services are planned. The CCRRN and CCR also have data concerning the educational level of teachers who participate in the Washington Scholarships program. While this data is far from complete, experience working with teachers to assess transferability and articulation of credits will be beneficial. Because we will need to support effective workforce development for any of the service expansions and integration to happen, we are ready to find ways to gather more detailed information. The Management Information System that will be configured and launched shortly as part of the Thrive by Five White Center demonstration project will also provide a repository for this type of information as we collect it.

The local child care resource and referral agency also has strong relationships with many providers in the community due to years of work providing technical assistance and support to local providers.

Outreach efforts have been taking place through the planning process in this community. Through these efforts, many providers were identified. Maps have been developed that show the location of center-based and family childcare homes. Formal Play and Learn groups provide outreach to informal providers in the community. The Puget Sound Educational Service District and the Highline School District both provide government-funded preschool services. In White Center, center directors have already "self-organized" and are anxious to get started. Without even knowing the terms of a QRIS, many of the staff in these programs are already exploring determinations of their course work articulation into specific degrees related to child development. As we field test elements of the quality improvement

publications. For example, messages regarding the importance of early learning environments will be distributed through Child Profile in the targeted communities, as well as in local newspapers and community center and faith based newsletters. Dissemination of parenting kits is also planned as part of this effort.

In the White Center area, families with children born at Highline Hospital are visited by a nurse and provided with useful early parenting information and referrals for appropriate services. Many of the families in White Center are deeply involved with their spiritual and cultural communities and receive information both formally and informally from individuals and community-based organizations that are important to them. A Community Advisory Committee, comprised of parents and residents has been formed as part of the White Center Early Learning Initiative. We will utilize these established “trusted sources” as messaging centers to encourage parents to look for quality care for their child.

The subcontractor, Child Care Resources (CCR) operates a telephone and web-based information and referral service that helps over 7000 families annually to find child care and other early learning programs. CCR maintains a database of all of the licensed and many of the exempt programs in King County and updates this database annually. CCR has a checklist and other information for parents on their web site and provides in-depth information about how to make sound child care choices. CCR has contracts with a number of local employers and with the Region 4 DSHS staff to provide enhanced child care resource and referral.

King County is also currently in the process of deploying its WIN-211 module to make a wide variety of service referrals available to county residents. For-profit publications such as Parent Map ([www.parentmap.com](http://www.parentmap.com)) and BabyMap ([www.babymap.com](http://www.babymap.com)) also provide updated information for families in this area.

## **2. Describe other information that parents want and need.**

Recently, Thrive by Five has conducted statewide polling and focus groups drawing from the communities of White Center and East Yakima. A report of those findings is included in the “Additional Information” Section. In those groups, parents say that they want high-quality early learning opportunities for their kids. We have found that they have a basic understanding of what young children need to be ready to succeed in school. Nearly half of the 600 respondents of a statewide poll believe that the time a child spends in preschool or care outside the home plays a significant role in their preparation for school. However, their responses highlight that many parents in our state do not yet know how vitally important high-quality early learning is to that success.

Parents seek providers and programs that, at a minimum, offer a warm and safe environment for their children. They place a high value on the education/training and experience of providers. Parents also speak about the importance of a provider that demonstrates a love for children and offers affordable and convenient care.

Child care resource and referral organizations consistently receive questions from parents wanting some indication of the quality and value of the child care providers that they are considering. Parents also frequently seek locations of child care services that have flexible hours, and care provided by teachers

with similar cultural and/or linguistic characteristics. Of the parents participating in our research, 80 percent thought a quality rating and improvement system would be a great idea. Forty-four percent of respondents believe that the state is doing too little to ensure that all families have access to high-quality affordable early learning opportunities. These findings show that we have much work to do in educating parents about the important work the state is currently doing as well as to help parents to recognize and value quality.

Regarding satisfaction with current care, one in four of the respondents would prefer different situations if they were available and affordable. In addition, 44 percent of respondents would be willing to pay more for high-quality child care programs, which again indicates that quality matters to parents. Interestingly, regardless of socio-economic level, most parents find it inherently difficult to trust child care providers even if they are licensed, as they believe licensing does not ensure high quality care.

The Thrive by Five White Center initiative has a Community Advisory Committee that is comprised mainly of parent/resident representatives. This committee serves to advise the Thrive by Five Washington White Center Initiative about services and programs, including the QRIS pilot project. Members also serve as key communicators about early learning to other parents and residents in White Center.

In White Center, a broad community-based outreach effort occurred in preparation for the Early Learning Initiative. In this outreach parents in the community were asked what early learning information they needed and wanted. Parents had an overwhelming desire for information that will support their efforts to prepare their children for entry into kindergarten. Parents want to know what they can do to help their children and what programs/activities exist in their community to assist them with preparing their children. Because of the broad scope of the Thrive by Five community investment, we will be engaging many families on an ongoing basis. As a result, we will be in a good position to include parent guidance and feedback in program designs as well as to integrate conversations within the community that can benefit the effort to improve child care quality.

During the planning process for demonstration community investments, and in partnership with the Trusted Advocates, we conducted a community summit of more than 400 residents to gather information from parents about their priorities for early learning services in White Center. Below is a sample of the results that most pertain to QRIS services (the full report is included in "Additional Information").

- Offer free (affordable) high quality child care for every family
- Value home teaching as well as center care and provide tools parents can use at home
- Turn to community leaders from different ethnic and cultural groups when designing curricula and policies
- Develop partnerships that address the needs of whole families
- Offer multi-cultural curricula

The Management Information System that we are building for the White Center community will support service deployment and integration within the community and be a repository of useful information about service utilization of a variety of types. Because actual use of services can provide the best evidence of the "market" for them, this will provide a valuable opportunity to test parent needs. Our MIS system will

give us the ability to track service/program request and stated needs so that we will better understand the type of information parents want and the needs that parents have regarding early learning.

Child Care Resources regularly surveys the parents they serve in order to evaluate the agency's information and referral services. This evaluation includes questions about how difficult it was to find child care and what parents' experience with that care was like. In addition, every 2-3 years, CCR surveys parents as part of their Strategic Planning process to learn what needs parents have. CCR will be surveying parents next in 2008.

### **3. Describe how parents prefer to get information about early learning opportunities in their community.**

As in most communities, parents in this community use a variety of resources to search for child care, including Child Care Resources phone and web based services and informal means such as the website [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org). Often they prefer to receive information through trusted sources such as family, friends and peers. In focus groups, parents unanimously asked for a website that would allow them to rate and comment on their experience with different providers, much like Amazon.com or a travel site. As noted in section 2 above, parents in these communities have much of their social, spiritual and personal lives connected to community institutions. The use of trusted messengers at social and other events for awareness and education efforts stand the best chance of spreading information rapidly.

Because the effort in this community will include family activities and events in a variety of venues and programs, we will be in a good position to establish continuous feedback loops and test methods of disseminating information and engagement. This strength, in addition to the number of parents already engaged in current planning efforts, will allow us to ensure that our approach and services are responsive.

The Thrive by Five Washington White Center initiative will also reach parents through a project-wide outreach plan to inform and attract families to services and activities. Parents participating in other Initiative services (e.g. home visiting, community-wide activities, etc.) will also provide natural groups for dissemination of information.

The White Center Initiative plans to develop Early Learning Liaison positions (three in the first year) whose sole purpose is to conduct outreach about early learning activities and services in White Center and to help connect parents and families to services that meet their needs and goals. In addition, the initiative will continue with a group called the Trusted Advocates, an existing network of resident leaders in White Center, to both disseminate and gather input from White Center's diverse population.

Parents in White Center get their information through informal channels. This community is characterized by outreach and community engagement activities that involve local community based organizations and trained individuals providing information and linkage to services. Through the Making Connections effort, White Center has identified and supported a group of individuals called the Trusted Advocates that work within the community as brokers of information and knowledge. As a result of this work, the White Center initiative will develop Community Liaisons that will be trained to provide outreach, information and linkage to services to parents with young children.

system, we expect to attract additional providers that are interested in being involved in quality improvement efforts.

CCR maintains a database of all of the licensed child care providers in King County and many of the license-exempt programs (including Head Start, ECEAP and many traditional preschools). The local child care provider list (included in the "Additional Information" section) provides some of this information already.

Because current providers of Head Start and ECEAP services have been engaged in this community effort and each program gathers the requested information, we will be able to obtain this detailed information concerning those programs. Because it is unregulated and not always visibly advertised, information about exempt preschool and child care has been notoriously difficult to obtain, even when physically canvassing the community. However, other services planned in this community will be designed to create an "attracting force" which can contribute to obtaining this information.

## **2. How many children can these programs serve if their enrollment is at 100%?**

As part of our plans to attract providers into the quality improvement effort, we anticipate assessing current and desired capacity among other aspects of child care operations. Currently available information is provided in the "Additional Information" section.

Child Care Resources maintains a database that is updated annually and collects both the licensed capacity and desired capacity of licensed child care programs. Utilizing the desired capacity data would paint a more realistic picture of the capacity in the community. A number of providers choose to serve fewer children than they are licensed to serve due to their comfort or they type of curriculum they are implementing.

## **3. Samples of evaluations that have been conducted on the quality and availability of child care and early learning programs in your community.**

A Communities Count survey is conducted bi-annually through the Seattle King County Health Department and other partners that includes some information about parent perceptions of quality and availability. The CCRRN maintains data concerning supply at the county level. In King County, Child Care Resources periodically conducts surveys of child care availability and also maintains a database of information provided by local child care providers.

Under contract to our partner, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Mathematica and the University of Washington have recently completed administration of a child care quality baseline measurement for licensed providers. This baseline measurement was done through provider interviews and child care quality observations using validated tools. The instruments used to gather the baseline were the revised Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, and the Family Child Care Rating Scale. While the rating scales will not be administered during the period of this grant, additional data will be captured when they are again administered in the Fall of 2008.

Additionally, we anticipate beginning our field tests with a low threshold for participation to encourage the maximum number of providers to participate. One assumed component of the lowest threshold is administration of a self-assessment. Data available from these participating providers will be valuable in developing an additional baseline of current quality. As part of the effort to attract providers into the quality improvement effort, we anticipate assessing current and desired capacity among other aspects of child care operations. Currently available information is provided in the "Additional Information" section.

#### **4. List of educators' levels of education and professional development in your community.**

Much of this data for providers in White Center was collected through the recently completed Readiness to Benefit project that was funded by the Department of Early Learning in which half of the providers in White Center were interviewed. In the case of centers, the data for that project was collected in an aggregate manner. Child Care Resources has collected some information about education levels and professional development data for all the licensed child care providers in King County as part of routine updates of their database. Having both data sets will allow us to complete a compare/contrast study of the focus community (White Center) and the county-wide data.

The initiative in White Center is designed to "attract" interested early learning programs to participate in voluntary expansion and improvement of services. As those providers participate, a rich set of data concerning the levels of professional development and education will be available through reports from the Management Information System which will support this community effort.

#### **5. Show what educators' need in their early learning environments, including:**

- Curriculum
- Materials
- Learning environments
- Developmentally appropriate play areas
- Technical assistance

Extensive interviews were completed during the Readiness to Benefit project with a subset of the eligible providers in the chosen community. The information collected informed us of basic characteristics of the program elements stated above. Some of the questions included:

- Does your program use a curriculum? If yes, what is it? If no, do teachers use any materials to provide daily educational experiences for children?
- If yes, what are the materials?
- Does your program receive technical assistance? If not, would you be interested?

We believe that reporting on the data for the subset of providers that we interviewed gives us a fairly accurate picture of the early learning environments in White Center. Many of the programs interviewed indicated a need for outdoor play equipment. However, we did not do extensive reviews of their outdoor play areas, and would need to conduct more thorough assessments of these areas in order to give an accurate picture of outdoor play areas for programs in White Center.

The model being developed for quality improvement assumes assessment of the classroom environment, review of teacher education, experience and competence, and appraisal of management capacity. It is

presumed that consideration of this data will inform the assignment of a “rating” of current care quality. As a result, once a coach/mentor begins working with each provider, a quality improvement plan can be co-created which will identify these needs. This data will be entered into the Management Information System and summative reports can be generated regarding these common areas of improvement.

However, early adopters of the quality improvement effort in the community will be asked to complete a self-assessment which will address at least these areas and from which a “sample” of what is needed can be developed.

c. K-12:

1) Describe your community kindergarten program and future goals, including existing or planned full-day kindergarten programs.

Through SB5841, this community will receive funds for Full Day Kindergarten and K-3 Demonstration programs. The Full Day Kindergarten will support the top 10% of schools with the highest poverty level. In order to be eligible for funding, these schools must have demonstrated strong connections and communications with early learning community providers. They must also participate in Kindergarten program readiness activities with early learning providers and parents. Clearly, seamless transitions between early learning environments and Kindergarten are already in motion in this community.

2) Describe your community relationship with K-12 as it pertains to early learning.

Again, through SB5841 funding, this community will house a K-3 demonstration program. In order to be eligible for funding through SB5841, this community had to demonstrate successful linkages with early learning providers in their community. Ongoing communication and collaboration between early learning providers and K-12 educators through meetings, seminars, round robins, etc. are underway, and are increasing and improving.

3) In your community relationship with K-12 described above, explain how this relationship includes ongoing communication and support for early learning educators and families.

Videoconferencing and collaborative meetings between early learning educators and K-12 educators have already taken place. This will continue throughout the QRIS planning and implementation phases. The White Center Business Plan includes developing a school connections program that will expand the partnership between White Center schools and all early learning services in White Center. The following is an initial idea of what these services might include:

**Systems change: shared resources, facilities and other supports** - explore co-location of some services to increase access of school district services to White Center initiative families; Highline Public Schools had agreed to provide the White Center initiative with space at Salmon Creek Elementary for infant, toddler and preschool programs; increase collaboration and partnership among school district and early learning staff and programs throughout White Center.

<p><b>Services for children with special needs</b> - explore partnerships that make birth to three early intervention services more accessible to White Center families, who currently have to travel outside of White Center to be served; jointly increase awareness about early identification and referral for special services, including joint training and common developmental screening tools used among school district, Part C provider agencies, early learning and White Center initiative staff.</p>
<p><b>Teen Parent Programs</b> - Explore joint supports for teen parents at White Center initiative Hub, or at Salmon Creek, and through other White Center initiative services (e.g. home visiting, supports for FFN and licensed care, etc).</p>
<p><b>English Language Learners: Children and Families</b> - Share best practices in serving ELL children and families, and coordinate services as these families transition from early learning services to school district services.</p>
<p><b>Community Outreach and School Readiness Messaging</b> - Coordinate and align community outreach and awareness efforts regarding school readiness. Develop agreed upon key messages about school readiness to share within the school district, early learning programs and the wider community.</p>
<p><b>Transition to school activities</b> - Collaborate to create more alignment between kindergarten expectations and curriculum at local preschools and child care programs.</p>

d. Professional Development and Education Organizations/ Institutions:

1. Indicate professional development and educational opportunities now available to early learning providers in your community.

STARS-credited course work is available in this community through a variety of venues. Some course work is college credit-bearing. Other efforts such as Washington Online, have attempted to create greater access to college coursework at times that are more convenient for early learning teachers. The Child Care Resource and Referral Network administers the Washington Scholarships program (formerly Washington TEACH) which is designed to promote access to traditional course offerings towards attainment of an Associate of Arts degree or CDA for early childhood professionals at community colleges (and soon at a University). The Training Resource and Interactive Network (TRAIN) administered by the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC) serves as a repository for training sessions.

There are a number of statewide professional development components that can be built upon to help prepare for and implement the QRIS. These supports include the Building Bridges modules that have been funded through the Department of Early Learning at area community colleges, the Career and Wage Ladder, STARS scholarships for community-based training, Washington Scholarships for Child Care Professionals for higher education, and the nurse consultant-partnerships through the Department of Public Health. A few area colleges have established Integrated Basic Education and Skills (IBEST) models for early childhood professionals that target limited English Language Learners and Seattle Central Community College is piloting a Chinese/Vietnamese Child Development Associates (CDA). There are nine area community colleges in King County that offer two-year early childhood education degree programs. Bachelor’s degree in early childhood or related fields include but are not limited to the University of Washington, the Praxis Institute for Early Childhood Education, Eastern Washington University at Bellevue Community College, Central Washington at Highline Community College. There

are also a number of online degree options such as Washington State University's Human Development program that are also emerging as necessary infrastructure to help increase accessibility for providers.

The CCRRN has a wealth of information and has offered in-kind support to share successful local models across the state and match up their statewide partners with the staff working in the demonstration community. Some models that might be helpful are the SELF (Support for Early Learning and Families) initiative in Clark County and the Pierce County linkages project that both have worked to create a systemic approach to professional development in their respective communities along with establishing better connection and partnerships with the K-12 system.

The City of Seattle has been a leader in developing programs that integrate professional development and coaching elements to effect and improve the quality of child care. Child Care Resources has been the recipient of contracts for these programs and has coordinated these professional development efforts. The models start with a baseline assessment of classroom quality and then focus on improving the assessment score over a period of time. An example of this is the Step Ahead Preschool project within the Seattle Early Learning Networks. The purpose of the project is to support children's optimal development so that they will be successful in school.

ELN works collaboratively with 2- and 4-year higher education systems: Shoreline Community College, Seattle Central, North Seattle, South Seattle, Highline, Renton, Center for Cultural and Linguistic Democracy, Praxis/Goddard, Antioch, and soon the University of Washington to provide the following:

- Community based Early Childhood Education classes,
- Classes at the community colleges that are available in the evening, weekend or in an "on-line" format
- Advising that takes place on-site so that teachers can easily access classes and receive assistance around articulation issues.

A partnership with Washington Scholars has brought about the following:

- A streamlined approach to having classes paid for—through a voucher system—rather than a pay out of pocket reimbursement plan.
- Dialog around future funds to create an I-BEST model at a community college—which would incorporate ECE certificate program with language support for teachers already in the field.

Additionally, there is a wealth of expertise that can be drawn upon locally from the University of Washington which has been a leader on issues around brain development, the social and emotional development of young children and special needs education. The Praxis Institute and the Center for Cultural and Linguistic Democracy staff are experts on cultural competency.

Our partners at the Puget Sound Educational Service District have carried out an effort entitled the Early Learning Outreach Project which has served as a key new pathway for moving from informal education and training to college coursework.

**2. Submit data you have, if any, that show whether the current professional development and educational opportunities accessible in your community are making a difference in the quality of early learning opportunities children receive.**

Washington State is known as the home of some of the most innovative, successful companies in the world. Yet for all that innovation, we are woefully behind when it comes to investing in the educators of our youngest residents. This is having a dramatic impact on school readiness. A 2004 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction study found that more than half of the children entering kindergarten in Washington State lacked the basic skills they needed to succeed: recognizing letters of the alphabet, being able to understand teachers' instructions, standing in line, etc. The study brought to light another troubling trend – in kindergarten classrooms with high percentages of students from low-income families, on average, only 25% of the children were prepared for school. Teacher training, education, and continuous professional development all have a direct impact on quality, which directly impacts children's preparedness for school.

Research indicates that one key element of early learning services that delivers improved outcomes for young children is the competence of the teachers in the classroom. One indicator of competence is education and another is experience. As part of our effort, we are committed to finding a way to assess teacher competence and learn more about the interaction of education and experience in this regard. The data system being created by Thrive by Five and parents in this community is designed to identify those opportunities for early childhood educators that are having the greatest impact on increasing the quality of early learning opportunities children receive. Findings from Thrive by Five's recent research indicate that parents also place a high value on provider education and training and would pay more for providers with more experience and education, as they see those as directly linked to quality.

CCR has implemented an ELN Tracking System that provides baseline information such as how many years teachers have been in the field, the kind of training and formal education they have and how they have been progressing on assessments of their classrooms. The data so far has confirmed that college classes combined with intensive coaching have raised the quality of care that teachers provide in the Step Ahead Preschools. While this system so far has been tracking only a small number of programs, the ability exists to track programs in White Center in this way.

**3. Describe how professional development and education are linked to early learning and K-12 in your community.**

Because most of the Head Start and ECEAP services in the community are not provided by school districts, most teaching staff do not have access to the career and wage progression opportunities and support of school districts as is the case in some Washington communities.

One of our strategies to address this in White Center will be to provide some White Center initiative-wide training to all early learning staff of all the various programs. Some of the common areas of focus will be: Reflective Practice, Supporting 1<sup>st</sup> Relationships, Cultural Diversity, etc. In addition, we are considering developing academic and career ladders for all EL staff. Among some ideas considered as part of the broader White Center demonstration community initiative are:

<p>Professional Development Strategies - Provide coordination and resources that make access to career and academic advancement more accessible and affordable early learning staff (teaching and family support staff) in White Center. Highline Community College is our lead academic partner in this effort and will assist White Center partners in accessing and coordinating with all local and state higher education institutions and systems.</p>
<p>Education and Training Clearinghouse - Provide a central, accessible clearinghouse of information regarding training and education opportunities for providers. This service will include general information, on-site academic advising, and referral to education and training providers. The Clearinghouse will compile current information about professional development opportunities, financial aid and scholarships, facilitate coordination across institutions and organizations, and encourage resolution of local barriers to professional development. Includes advising and support for bilingual/bicultural staff who may need support understanding and meeting English language proficiency requirements.</p>
<p>Prior Learning Assessment and Pathways-Based Advising - Partner with community colleges to develop a process by which competencies and prior learning can be assessed and articulated for credit toward certification or college degree; develop a comprehensive pathway model for life-long education and training for early learning providers.</p>
<p>Early Learning Education Center - Create a classroom and computer lab and other instructional tools for onsite or online college classes at the White Center Hub. This on-site educational center is a place where college resources can be assessed by staff and families in a familiar, accessible location.</p>
<p>Expand Washington Scholarships in the White Center Target Area - Pursue and advocate for increased Washington Scholarship awards for White Center staff. These scholarships cover the cost of attaining CDA, AA and BA degrees.</p>
<p>Accreditation for community and technical colleges - Partner with community and technical colleges to support three community or technical colleges near White Center in achieving national accreditation through NAEYC.</p>
<p>Increase the number and diversity of early childhood faculty - Provide funding for Diverse Faculty Internships, endowed early learning chairs, dual appointments between community colleges and four year institutions.</p>
<p>White Center Staff Training and Support Strategies - in the White Center Hub to support the ongoing training and skills of early learning staff in White Center, the White Center Hub will function as a model center and regional training center that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offers “training strands” that complement the Quality Enhancement and Professional Development plans of community child care and preschool programs and utilizes the Hub as a hands-on learning lab. Possible training strand topics include: observations, assessment and individualizing, setting up environments, planning and documentation systems, implementing culturally relevant curriculum and cultural competency.</li> <li>▪ Serves as a resource for increasing skills, knowledge and capacity to provide culturally relevant</li> </ul>

early learning services. Partner with community residents who serve as “cultural competency advisors” for all early learning programs as they work to increase the cultural relevancy of their programs. Hub programs model teaching approaches that value and retain home language, and employ bilingual/bicultural staff.

- Serve as a model for family support services - utilizing a strengths-based approach to developing Family Partnership Plans and implementing meaningful and individualized Parent Involvement strategies.
- Serve as a venue for the White Center initiative community-wide services, including being the “hub” for White Center Peer Programs, which train parents to teach other parents in the areas of Literacy, Health, Male Involvement, and Advocacy. The Hub/Regional Training Center will also be the home of the White Center Interpreter Training Program that provides professional interpreter training to parents and other residents.
- Serve as Bounce Learning Network site - host meeting and training events that promote Educare’s principles and practices of high quality early learning services.
- Partner with higher education institutions to make the White Center hub an internship and student teaching site for students enrolled in early education degree programs. Partnerships with higher education may also include collaborations on demonstrating best practices that are being studied or investigated.

Child Care/Caregiver Substitute Training Program - Offer training programs for substitutes that can be a resource for child care, preschool programs, FFNs and families to use. This service will address both the need for more substitutes and the need families have for evening and weekend care.

Language and Literacy Training Programs – A research-based approach that utilizes literacy coaches in a variety of capacities to ensure that language and literacy strategies are infused in all White Center initiative services will be offered.

In addition to our demonstration community investments, a School Readiness Connections initiative is being designed which may contribute to a solution to this challenge. Following successful models like those in Bremerton and Bellevue, we will be investing in models to create connections among early learning and K-12 teachers and parents to ensure that we are all supporting consistent success for young children. One positive aspect of this initiative is that it will create an opportunity to have ongoing exploration of ways to increasingly strengthen connections among the staff in early learning and K-12. Substantive change to the infrastructure that undergirds these workforces may be explored through our infrastructure investments, but the major change necessary to labor agreements, eligibility for workforce development systems and the resources necessary to bring early learning professional development opportunities up to those available to K-12 teachers will require legislative support and action. We and our partners stand ready to engage in exploration and field testing of promising approaches.

**e. Community and Potential Partnerships:**

**1. Describe the relationship you have with your community.**

Both Puget Sound ESD and Child Care Resources have been active in the White Center Community for well over a decade. CCR has recruited and established child care home businesses and provided training and technical assistance to many of the providers in White Center. Puget Sound ESD has operated Head Start programs in White Center for many years. Both organizations have partnered

with the Highline School District, Highline Community College, Seattle King County Public Health and the Annie E. Casey Foundation to provide a range of services in the community.

With the recent effort to plan a deep and broad set of supports for early learning in White Center, Thrive by Five Washington, PSESD, CCR and other community partner have developed effective ongoing relationships and are planning a variety of collaboratively designed programs with deep community input and involvement.

**2. Explain ongoing communication and support for early learning educators and families in your community.**

As stated above, training and technical assistance has been available in the White Center community through a number of agencies for many years. Both community based trainings and training at the local community colleges have been available to early learning educators. There is also a network of services for parents and families. The Thrive by Five White Center project will greatly increase the menu and depth of services to families. What the QRIS will bring is more depth and breadth of early learning opportunities to the community, so that providers can deepen their learning and improve quality in a much more comprehensive way.

**3. Describe potential partnerships to support a QRIS pilot and system planning effort in your community.**

Partnerships for a QRIS pilot and system planning need to engage various stakeholders in the community including trainers, higher education, providers, business and parents. There will be a need to engage technical experts who can offer the proposed training and professional development opportunities both informal and formal to those working with children directly that are included in the discussion. For informal community-based training, it will be important to engage training organizations and trainers for their assessment of what they view the community needs are. For formal education, it will be important to engage the nine area community colleges where the workforce can obtain two-year degree and a number of emerging colleges and universities where a four-year option is available.

The other major partners include the director, teachers, and staff that work on a daily basis with children. Practitioners engaged in the community may include the Center Directors groups, family child care associations, the provider group in Burien, and others. These groups will be critical to assess the viability for participation of staff and help to insure significant "volunteerism" to participate in QRIS.

Additionally, parents are the primary audience for QRIS. Parents will need to be engaged in the process to comment on the simplicity and understanding of what the rating means. Vehicles such as Born Learning can be used to assist parents in their understanding.

To develop and deliver services, we anticipate working with a variety of partners such as the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, community colleges, universities and state agencies to develop components of the professional development system which will be necessary to support broad-scale improvement in the quality of care.

Organizations like the Center on Infant Mental Health and Development will be integral to development of effective coaching and mentoring processes. Partnerships with Shorebank and the University of Washington Business School can augment business practice coaching and financial stability, and child care businesses an increase their quality and business sophistication.

Support from local United Ways and other business, civic and philanthropic organizations can offer financial support, engender local understanding and championing, as well as promote visibility of the effort.

As the community intermediary for our deep community investments, PSESD will help coordinate QRIS activities with the other White Center initiative activities, to leverage all the support/services that will be provided for the best community-wide effect. For example, QRIS sites in White Center will benefit from the other community-wide activities.

We are also fortunate that local center directors and family child care providers (family child care associations, SEIU, etc.) have been supportive of efforts to improve quality of care.

#### **f. Project Approach/Methodology**

**1. Describe the methodological approach your organization will use to conduct this project. Please address the below questions and include a draft work plan and project schedule.**

We anticipate that considerable testing and learning will be necessary to design the ultimate Quality Rating & Improvement System that the state adopts. As such, we see it as valuable to gather information, try various approaches and gather data about success. We believe the following principles are important to consider as the development of a system proceeds:

#### **Important Principles for an Effective QRIS:**

1. Establish design and development capacity to learn from initial sites and integrate lessons into further expansion.
2. Separate licensing from rating and technical assistance.
3. Use existing resources such as local resource and referral agencies, faith-based and other community organizations, and child care businesses to deliver child care services efficiently and effectively.
4. Focus on saturating contiguous geographic areas to sufficient depth to allow the above-mentioned market forces to work, as well as to realize efficiencies in program assessment and mentoring functions.
5. Provide adequate funds to create dramatic improvement in areas funded, rather than hobbling the existing system with under-funded mandates.
6. Approach child care centers/homes with a business development mentality as opposed to a "regulatory plus" approach.
7. Use quality enhancement grants (in addition to tiered reimbursements and/or other subsidies, at least initially) allowing child care businesses flexibility in determining the best use of quality enhancement funding.
8. Over time, transition solely to providing enhancement grants to child care businesses rather than subsidies to children to increase program continuous improvement and stability.

9. Use mechanisms to encourage lowering tuition in appropriate instances and increasing compensation to retain highly-qualified staff.
10. Create a seamless program to join existing systems and services statewide, including provisions for a system for workforce training.
11. Establish regional centers of excellence (virtual or physical), establishing a clear model for parents and providers alike.
12. Use the law of attraction to connect families with high-quality centers/homes.
13. Focus on serving virtually all families without means testing, but providing sliding scale and tuition scholarship options for appropriate families above 100% subsidy.

Since the QRIS is intended to be voluntary and since it is our belief that the most successful way to gather accurate and meaningful information and to test approaches is to create a system of attraction rather than to require participation, our approach and the activities listed reflect that. A draft work plan with associated project deadlines follows.

## DRAFT WORK PLAN White Center

Because the DRAFT Statement of work provided in the RFP suggests some additional/different tasks than are specifically enumerated in the Technical Proposal section of the RFP, the following draft Work Plan attempts to display the Area of Work, as well as the Technical Proposal area as they relate to identified activities.

DRAFT WORK PLAN					
Work Area	Technical Proposal Area	Activity	Milestone/Document	Goal/Objective	Timeline
State QRIS Learning Community	Project Methodology	Oversee project and provide strategic direction	QRIS implementation plan	Ensure project success	06/30/08
State QRIS Learning Community	Project Methodology	Participate in Department of Early Learning 5-community planning meetings	Attendance	Support and engage in development of a common approach	Monthly
State QRIS Learning Community	Project Methodology	Develop interim progress reports	Progress reports submitted	-Keep partners informed -Sharing of Information	Bimonthly
State QRIS Learning Community	Project Methodology	Respond to Department of Early Learning QRIS planning questions	Responses Completed	Assist in design deliberations	As needed
State QRIS Learning Community	Project Methodology	Develop summary of lessons learned	<i>"Lessons Learned"</i>	Provide documentation for policy deliberations	06/30/08
Community Engagement	Project Methodology	Identify community stakeholders with an interest in QRIS design and field testing	<i>Community QRIS Stakeholder List</i>	-Promote community engagement -Ensure relevance of design	12/31/07
Community Engagement	Project Methodology	Conduct community planning meetings regarding design, implementation and evaluation	Minutes and products from meetings	-Promote community engagement -Ensure relevance of design	Ongoing

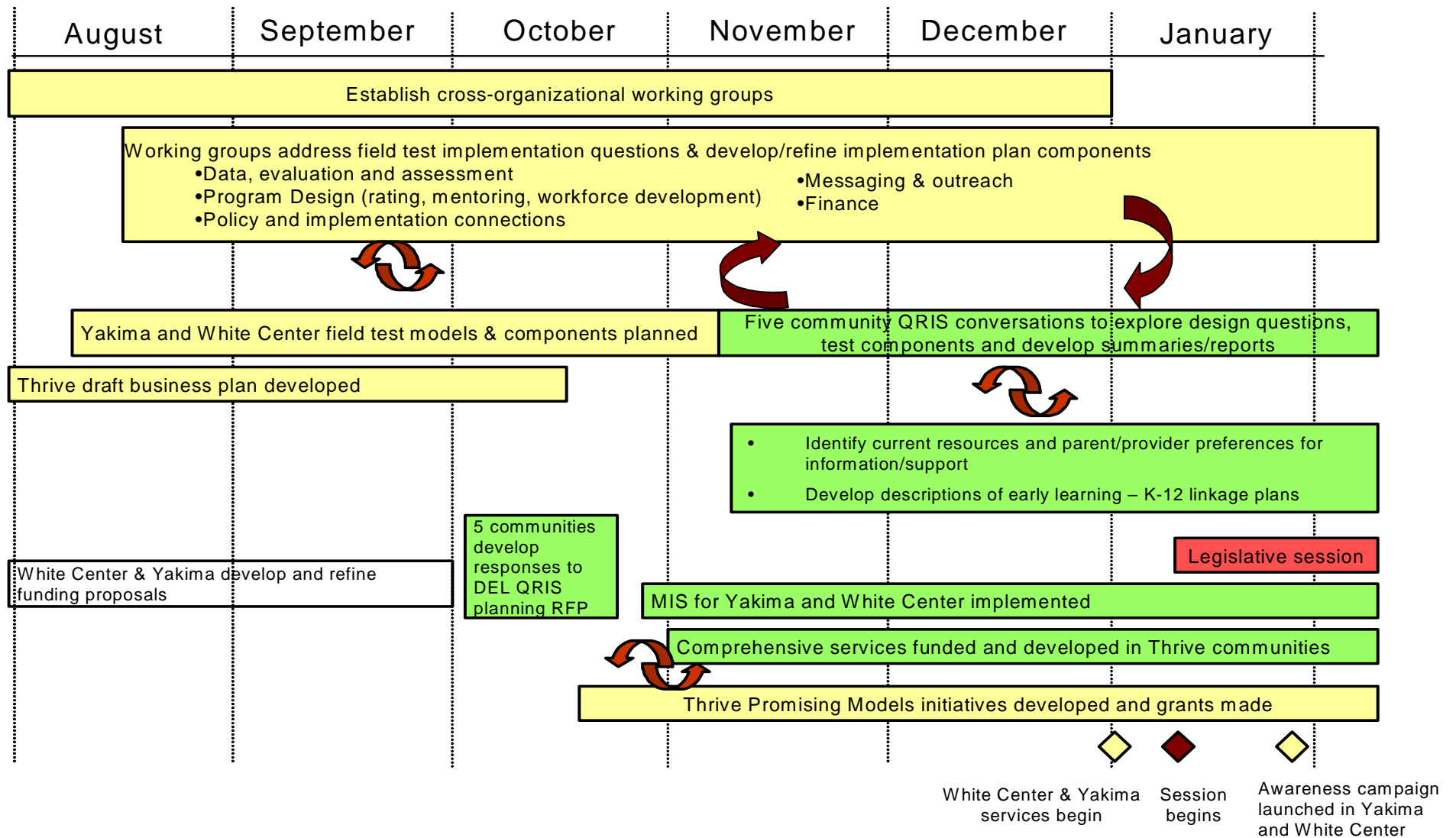
DRAFT WORK PLAN					
Work Area	Technical Proposal Area	Activity	Milestone/Document	Goal/Objective	Timeline
Community Engagement	Project Methodology	Develop and disseminate messages about QRIS through Born Learning partners	Messages	-Leverage existing relationships -Prepare community for QRIS	06/30/08
Community Engagement	Project Methodology	Gather perspectives and test messages through CCR focus groups	Messages	-Promote community engagement -Ensure relevance of design	06/30/08
Development of Work Plan	Project Methodology	Identify resources in place to support QRIS	Detailed list of resources	-Discovery -Build upon existing resources	1/31/08
Development of Work Plan	Project Methodology	Develop a QRIS Approach and Work Plan built upon Washington Learns, Kids Matter and other work	QRIS Work Plan	Outline Plans	03/15/08
Development of Work Plan	Parents	Inventory parent information resources	<i>Parent Information Resource List</i>	Discovery	1/31/08
Development of Work Plan	Parents	Identify opportunities for parent engagement, leadership and support in planning	<i>Chart of Parent Engagement Points</i>	Promote parent engagement	1/31/08
Development of Work Plan	Community Partnerships	Identify desired and secured key partnerships in support of QRIS	<i>List of Desired and Secured Partnerships</i>	Foster collaboration at community level	1/31/08
Development of Work Plan	Community Partnerships	Develop strategy and plan for communicating approach, opportunities and timelines for local QRIS field testing	<i>Local QRIS Communication Plan</i>	Ensure accurate information about QRIS development is readily available	1/31/08
Environmental Scan	Parents	Identify parent preferences for receiving information about child care identified through focus groups	<i>Parent Attitudes Regarding Child Care</i>	-Parent engagement -Ensure relevance of design	1/31/08
Environmental Scan	Parents	Identify provider preferences for receiving support for quality improvement from focus	<i>Provider Attitudes Regarding Support for</i>	-Provider engagement -Ensure relevance of design	1/31/08

DRAFT WORK PLAN					
Work Area	Technical Proposal Area	Activity	Milestone/Document	Goal/Objective	Timeline
		group findings	<i>Quality</i>		
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Develop list of EL programs in service area (licensed, state/fed regulated)	Report generated from data captured in community MIS	Discovery	06/30/08
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Start building list of exempt providers attracted into the system	Report generated from data captured in community MIS	Discovery Creating a System of Attraction	06/30/08
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Develop List of educators in participating EL programs in service area	Report generated from data captured in community MIS	Discovery Creating a System of Attraction	06/30/08
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Assess licensed capacity of licensed or regulated EL programs in service area	Report generated from data captured in community MIS	Discovery	06/30/08
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Gather any samples of evaluation reports concerning local child care quality	Copies of reports	Link existing data to design	03/15/08
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Develop list of educators' current education and experience level among participating providers	Report generated from data captured in community MIS	Identify workforce development needs in each community	06/30/08
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Develop summary of curriculum needs among participating providers	Report generated from data captured in community MIS	Establish areas of need within learning environments Improved quality of learning environment	06/30/08
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Develop summary of material needs among participating providers	Report generated from data captured in community MIS	Establish areas of need within learning environments -Improved quality of learning environment	06/30/08
Environmental	Educators and EL	Develop summary of improved	Report generated from	Establish areas of need	06/30/08

DRAFT WORK PLAN					
Work Area	Technical Proposal Area	Activity	Milestone/Document	Goal/Objective	Timeline
Scan	Programs	environment needs among participating providers	data captured in community MIS	within learning environments -Improved quality of learning environment	
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Develop summary of need for developmentally- appropriate play areas among participating providers	Report generated from data captured in community MIS	-Establish areas of need within learning environments -Improved quality of learning environment	06/30/08
Environmental Scan	Educators and EL Programs	Develop summary of need for coaching and mentoring among participating providers	Report generated from data captured in community MIS	-Continued capability building -Improved quality of learning environment	06/30/08
Environmental Scan	K-12	Describe current kindergarten programs and plans/timelines for program expansion	<i>Local Kindergarten Program Vision</i> document	Foster a seamless transition for children, families and teachers	01/31/08
Environmental Scan	K-12	Develop narrative description of early learning and K-12 connections in service area	<i>Early Learning and K-12 Connections</i> document	Foster a seamless transition for children, families and teachers	01/31/08
Environmental Scan	K-12	Develop narrative and/or graphic of communication and support loops among families, EL educators and K-12 educators	<i>Early Learning &amp; K-12 Communication and Support Loops</i> document	-Community engagement -Sharing of information	06/30/08
Environmental Scan	Professional Development	Inventory and create graphic of available professional development opportunities	<i>Available Professional Development Opportunities</i> document	Build upon existing community resources	01/31/08
Environmental Scan	Professional Development	Create narrative and graphic of EL and K-12 professional development ladder	<i>Early Learning - K-12 Professional Development Ladder</i> document	-Continued capability building -Improved quality of learning environment	06/30/08

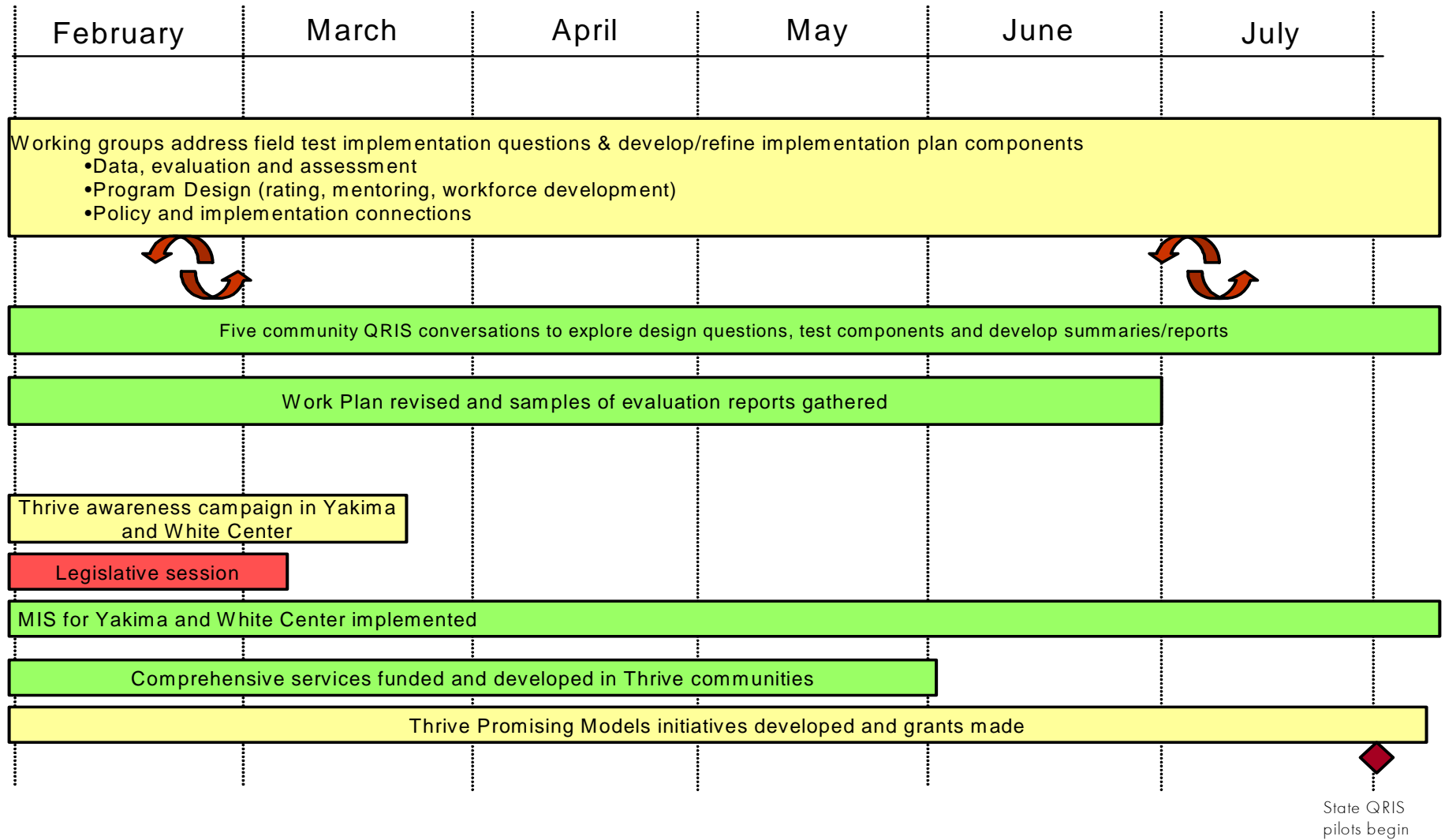
- Joint effort
- Thrive effort
- Local partner effort

# Quality Improvement Field Test Timeline



- Joint effort
- Thrive effort
- Local partner effort

# Quality Improvement Field Test Timeline



**2. What resources are available in your community that will allow you to bring together parents, early educators, administrators, school systems, business interests, and broader community representatives to collaborate on the design and implementation of the QRIS?**

Thrive by Five is partnering with organizations that have a long history of community-building activities and collaboration. As noted above, we have a wealth of knowledge and experts who are engaged in the research and practice of early learning.

White Center has a rich and varied culture which provides incredible opportunities for creativity. The community has a history of joining forces, considering the needs of diverse families and varied perspectives as evident in the successful joint planning of the demonstration community effort. A year and a half of planning and convening for this purpose creates a strong base upon which to build this effort.

**3. What additional resources (if any) are needed to create a system for successfully implementing the QRIS in your community?**

Over time, it will be important that QRIS in Yakima, White Center, Kitsap, Spokane and the 5th community are coordinated and that there is consistency where desired and needed. It will be important for parents to be able to assess a consistent standard for quality. Similarly, it will be important for providers to have an experience in which they are treated equitably and in a manner where the process in which they have volunteered to participate is understandable.

As QRIS models are designed and elements field-tested, it will be important to ensure that there are adequate financial resources, to test elements, to ensure that parents continue to have access to high-quality programs over time and to ensure that the efforts of providers to improve the quality of the learning opportunities they provide are financially sustainable. As such, allocation of adequate financial resources, for each "expansion" and partnerships with other organizations and sectors (such as banking) will be key components of success.

**4. What infrastructure components are currently in place in your community that could be used to most effectively prepare for and implement the QRIS?**

Puget Sound ESD and Child Care Resources have long histories of working to improve quality of care available for children through various programs such as Head Start/ECEAP and community-based trainings. Child Care Resources has built up a group of trained coaches that can be deployed in the community; they have staff members who are experts on accreditation standards for center-based care and family child care owners. They are the lead agency for the City of Seattle's Early Learning Networks which is a similar effort to improve the quality of care for low income preschoolers in Southeast and Southwest Seattle. CCR has also worked to create advancement opportunities for refugee and immigrant woman through their Child Care Careers program among many other activities and experiences.

In addition, there is a wealth of technical expertise that can be drawn upon locally from the University of Washington which has been a leader on issues around brain development, the social and emotional

development of young children and special needs education. The Praxis Institute and the Center for Cultural and Linguistic Democracy staff are experts on cultural competency.

A few area colleges have established Integrated Basic Education and Skills (IBEST) models for early childhood professionals that target limited English Language Learners. Seattle Central Community College is piloting a Chinese/Vietnamese Child Development Associates (CDA). There are nine area community colleges in King County that offer two-year early childhood education degree programs. Bachelor's degree in early childhood or related fields include but are not limited to the University of Washington, the Praxis Institute for Early Childhood Education, Eastern Washington University at Bellevue Community College, Central Washington at Highline Community College. There are a number of online degree options (such as Washington State University's Human Development program) that are emerging as necessary infrastructure to help increase accessibility for providers.

Finally, there are a number of statewide professional development components that can be built upon to help prepare for and implement the QRIS. These supports include the Building Bridges modules that have been funded through the Department of Early Learning at area community colleges, the Career and Wage Ladder, STARS scholarships for community-based training, Washington Scholarships for Child Care Professionals for higher education and the nurse consultant-partnerships through the Department of Public Health.

Our partner the Child Care Resource and Referral Network has a wealth of information and has offered in-kind support to share successful local models across the state and match up their statewide partners with the staff working in the demonstration community. Some models that might be helpful are the SELF (Support for Early Learning and Families) initiative in Clark County and the Pierce County linkages project that both have worked to create a systemic approach to professional development in their respective communities along with establishing better connection and partnerships with the K-12 system.

**5. Based on your knowledge of and experience with working with stakeholders in your community, what strategies will be most effective for preparing for, implementing, and evaluating the QRIS in your community?**

Our partnership organizations have vast experience working with various stakeholders. Based on our experience, early engagement of a broad group of stakeholders will be essential to ensure buy-in and support in the short- and long-term. Building trust and relationships will serve as the foundation for ensuring participation and engagement in the process from planning to evaluation and to assure stakeholders that their input is necessary for the development of an effective long-term quality improvement initiative.

Clear communication with various stakeholders will also be an important strategy for a successful QRIS. This includes clear and frequent communication with stakeholders about progress, goals and outcomes for QRIS and an understanding of how group decisions will be made, recorded and implemented. For participants, this includes understanding what the benefits of participation and non-participation are. Finally, stakeholders will need to understand how feedback from the community will or will not be integrated into the decision-making process of the lead agencies involved.