Learn & Grow

Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System

(AK-QRIS)

Policies and Procedures Manual

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Section 1: Acknowledgements

Funding for Learn & Grow is provided by the State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services Child Care Program Office and the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development via grants to Alaska's statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network, **thread**. Learn & Grow is located within and managed by **thread**. The creation and updating of this document involved members of the Learn & Grow Executive Committee. See Learn & Grow website for list of Executive members.

Thank you to the individuals and organizations who have contributed time, dedication, and resources to the ongoing development, implementation and evaluation of Learn & Grow. Below are a list of organizations that have provided support in the planning and development of Learn & Grow.

Organizations within the state of Alaska:

- **thread**, Alaska's Child Care Resource & Referral Network
- State of Alaska (SOA) Department of Health and Social Services
    - Child Care Program Office (CCPO)
    - Office of Children's Services, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS)
    - Senior and Disabilities Services, Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program
- State of Alaska (SOA) Department of Education and Early Development
    - Pre- elementary
    - 619 Preschool Special Education
    - Head Start Collaboration Office
- Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Child Care Licensing Program
- System for Early Education Development (SEED) Steering Committee
- University of Alaska System
- Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)
- Alaska Afterschool Network
- Best Beginnings
- Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Child Care Group Homes, and Licensed Child Care Homes ECE Administrators
- Alaska Child Care and Development Fund Tribal Organizations
- Alaska Head Start Association

National Organizations:

- United States Administration for Children & Families, Office of Child Care
- BUILD Initiative https://www.buildinitiative.org/
- QRIS National Learning Network https://qrisnetwork.org
- ICF International https://www.icfi.com/
- Child Trends https://www.childtrends.org
- Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Care https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ

Section 2: Introduction

Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) is named Learn & Grow. The goal of a Quality Recognition and Improvement System is to help early childhood education (ECE) to improve the quality of their services while programs stay actively engaged in continuous quality improvement. A QRIS can provide parity across ECE programs that might otherwise remain siloed in funding, and augment alignment in federal or state policies and quality standards. Comprehensive resources and supports are critical in helping ECE programs work toward and achieve higher quality. As ECE programs advance in QRIS levels they are recognized for their achievements and are supported by fiscal resources, professional development, and technical assistance. Rather than have an emphasis on the rating component of a QRIS, Alaska has chosen to emphasize the strengths and efforts of ECE programs to improve quality and has changed the traditional "R for Rating" in QRIS to stand for "Recognition".

Learn & Grow provides a quality framework for ECE programs. Learn & Grow also provides families, communities, and policy makers with an understanding of what quality ECE is and the impact it can have on children's development and readiness to learn and succeed in life.
Learn & Grow utilizes a hybrid system with five (5) levels of quality. A hybrid QRIS is made up of two features: 1) Level 1 and 2 are blocks which require programs to complete all the quality activities in a level to receive that level designation; and 2) Level 3, 4, and 5 are combinations of both required activities and a menu of points that programs can choose from at each level of quality. The five (5) levels of quality build on the foundation of health and safety standards that govern Licensed and regulated ECE program facilities in the State of Alaska.

There are five (5) levels of quality within Learn & Grow.

Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality (Block)
Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality (Block)
Level 3: Committing to Higher Quality (Hybrid)
Level 4: Growing Into Higher Quality (Hybrid)
Level 5: Thriving In Higher Quality (Hybrid)

Each of these levels has progressive quality standards in the areas of:

- Administration & Leadership
- Staff Qualifications & Professional Development
- Learning Environment, Adult-Child Interactions, and Child Outcomes
- Family & Community Engagement

In July of 2016 Learn & Grow launches as a voluntary statewide system available for State of Alaska and Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Group Homes, and Licensed Child Care Homes. It included the first two of the five (5) levels of quality: Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality and Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality.

In FY20 Learn & Grow will be available to all State of Alaska/MOA Licensed Centers, Group Homes, Homes, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-elementary programs; Additionally, Learn & Grow will explore participation of DEED approved programs (Head Start, Pre-elementary, and Preschool Special Education).

Future implementation of Learn & Grow will include making Level 3, 4, and 5 available to all program types.

Section 3: Purpose of the Learn & Grow Policies and Procedures Manual

This manual provides the policies, procedures and technical details to support system partners in administering Learn & Grow, and may be used for training and reference. The manual provides a comprehensive description of:

- History of QRIS;
- Purpose of Learn & Grow;
- Learn & Grow partners;
- How ECE programs will participate in Learn & Grow including procedures for enrollment, participation, verification, and renewal; and
- Supports and resources available to participating State of Alaska/MOA Licensed Centers, Group Homes, Homes, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-elementary programs; and DEED approved Preschools and Head Start programs who voluntarily enroll in Learn & Grow.

Section 4: Learn & Grow Policies and Procedures Manual Users

Several audiences may use this policies and procedures manual. Users of the manual include, but are not limited to:

- Alaska's statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network, **thread** staff who:
    - Support ECE programs to stay actively engaged in continuous quality improvement activities and maintain or advance their Learn & Grow level of recognition; and
    - Assist ECE programs with assessment, verification, and renewal of recognition levels
- State of Alaska Child Care Program Office staff who:
    - Oversee the grant to **thread** and collaborate/coordinate with **thread** staff on an ongoing basis regarding the development and implementation of Learn & Grow and other professional development activities and ECE services; and
    - License child care facilities statewide, with the exception of the MOA
- ECE programs including:
    - Licensed Child Care Centers

    - Licensed Child Care Group Homes
    - Licensed Home Child Care
    - Licensed Early Head Start
    - Licensed Head Start
    - Licensed Pre-elementary
    - DEED Certified Pre-elementary Programs
        - Head Start
        - Pre-Elementary
        - Preschool Special Education
    - Tribally Approved Child Care programs

- Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
    - DEED approved Pre-elementary, program (School District non-special education and education Preschool and Head Start)
- MOA, Child Care Licensing Program staff who license child care facilities within the MOA;
- Interested and/or participating EC professionals;
- Interested families; and
- Other state or federal workers/contractors with a direct or indirect involvement and interest in Quality Recognition and Improvement Systems.

Section 5: QRIS History

National QRIS History

The first state sponsored and administered Quality Rating System was launched in Oklahoma in 1998. Initially designed as a consumer education tool and as a mechanism to build upon minimum health and safety standards, by 2005, ten (10) states had adopted a QRS including North Carolina, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Colorado and the District of Columbia. During this period of rapid development and system implementation, some states added the 'I' to QRS, placing an intentional focus and emphasis on improvement, not just rating.

According to the QRIS Compendium*, there are 43 current QRIS in 41 states (Florida operates three county QRIS programs within their state).

States have implemented QRISs' in various phases, dependent on resources, partnership, and state policies, for example:

- All of the statewide QRISs' allow child care centers and Head Start/Early Head Start programs to participate.
- Twenty-one of the statewide QRISs' allow school-age programs to participate and all but two allow family child care homes to participate in their QRISs'.
- Twenty of the statewide QRISs' allow state-funded prekindergarten programs to participate, as well.

**QRIS Compendium is a nationally recognized clearing house of state level QRIS data and resources.*

Alaska's QRIS History

Since 2002, Alaska has worked to move a QRIS forward. This process of development has included two QRIS pilots: The Hearts for Kids and Quality Enrichment Demonstration Project.

Hearts for Kids

Alaska's first pilot Quality Recognition System (QRS) initiative occurred between April 2002-August 2003 in Fairbanks, Alaska. The initiative was called Hearts for Kids. Hearts for Kids was designed to raise the quality of child care in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. Thirteen State of Alaska Licensed Child Care Home programs and 24 State of Alaska Licensed Child Care Center or School-age programs participated. Hearts for Kids provided valuable information about the strengths, challenges, and needs of ECE programs. Some of the Hearts for Kids findings and recommendations included:

- An overall increase in the quality of classroom environments as measured by pre-post environment rating scale scores;
- Language and Reasoning skills of adults showed the largest gain from pre-post environment rating scores;
- The degree of quality increase was greater for unsubsidized programs narrowing the gap between the unsubsidized and subsidized programs;
- Alaska needs a reliable data collection and quality assurance system with a uniform set of standards for assessing the quality of ECE programs; and
- ECE program Administrators need resources and supports to help programs improve quality.

Quality Enrichment Demonstration Project (QEDP)

In 2008, the Quality Enrichment Demonstration Project (QEDP) was implemented by **thread** statewide with State of Alaska and MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Group Homes and Licensed Child Care Homes. The primary purpose of the QEDP was to determine the effect of specific intervention strategies (i.e. assessment, technical assistance, and financial incentives) and characteristics of ECE teachers (i.e. education level, hourly wage, and experience) on improving the overall quality of ECE environments. Thirty-three programs and 117 classrooms, 33 ECE program directors, and approximately 323 ECE teachers participated. The QEDP drew several conclusions:

- The educational level and consistency of ECE teachers had a positive effect on the quality of ECE environments;
- Consultation supports and relationship based practices were key intervention strategies to improving the quality of ECE environments; and
- The Infant/Toddler and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales-revised (ITERS and ECERS-R) are reliable and valid tools to both assess and help identify activities for ECE providers to implement in order to enrich the quality of the classroom environments.

Alaska Quality Recognition and Improvement System Reports

Alaska's QRIS Report 2008

In 2008, with funding from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, the Alaska Humanities Forum in partnership with Best Beginnings, contracted with Anne Mitchell of Early childhood education Policy Research to assemble a team of national experts to work with the Alaska QRIS Advisory Committee. The national team was Anne Mitchell, Louise Stoney and Judy Collins. Based on research from other state QRIS, national trends and previous data from the Hearts for Kids and QEDP projects, recommendations and a draft of quality standards and implementation guidelines were developed. The 2008 report includes specific recommendations on:

- Conducting a field test;
- How to assign a rating;
- Implementation strategies;
- Conducting environment rating scale assessments;
- Recommendations on quality standard areas;
- ECE program and provider supports;
- Administering quality recognition awards;
- Promoting consumer engagement strategies; and
- Policy development.

Alaska's QRIS Report 2011

In 2011, the Advisory Committee reviewed the 2008 report, Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System: Final Report with Recommendations for Implementation. This report articulated the goals for Alaska's QRIS which were affirmed in January 2011:

1. Be a sustainable system to recognize, reward, and improve the quality of ECE programs;
2. Provide reliable methods for parents and the public to evaluate ECE programs;
3. Ensure children have access to quality ECE programs that offer strong foundations for learning and life-long positive outcomes.

Next steps in the development of a comprehensive quality ECE system for Alaska were identified and included:

- Adopt assessment criteria and tools;
- Adopt a recognition system;
- Establish a governance structure;
- Update the 2008 plan, "Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System" and include an implementation timeline;
- Revise child care licensing regulations to phase in membership in Alaska's Early childhood education Professional Development Registry and to align professional development standards with Alaska's System for Early Education Development (SEED); and
- Collect cross-sector workforce data to identify and track trends.

Alaska QRIS 2013-Present

In 2013, the Department of Health and Social Services Child Care Program Office allocated funds to **thread**, Alaska's Child Care Resource and Referral Network, to manage the development and implementation of Alaska's QRIS. In December 2013, a QRIS Director was hired and re-assembled stakeholder groups and committees to work on revisions to the 2011 QRIS plan and helped develop the current plan.

Phase I of Learn & Grow

In July 2016, Phase I of Learn & Grow was launched and made available for State of Alaska and MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and Homes. Phase I includes Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality and Level 2: Moving into Higher Quality.

Phase II & III of Learn & Grow

In FY20 Learn & Grow will be available to all State of Alaska/MOA Licensed Centers, Group Homes, Homes, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-elementary programs; Additionally, Learn & Grow will explore participation of DEED approved programs (Head Start, Pre-elementary, and Preschool Special Education).

Phase III: Future implementation of Learn & Grow will include making Level 3, 4, and 5 available to all program types including Licensed stand-alone school-age programs.

Section 6: QRIS Purpose

QRIS National Purpose

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a "method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in ECE settings" (Mitchell, 2005, p.4) (Most states use the word rating vs. recognition with exception of Kansas and Alaska). A QRIS is a unique tool for ECE systems reform that has the potential to reach programs that serve a wide range of children and are financed by many public and private sources. "QRIS can exist on a spectrum in terms of their development and implementation and can operate statewide or in a local area. A fully functioning QRIS, however, includes the following components:

1. Quality standards for programs and ECE providers;
2. Supports and an infrastructure to meet such standards;
3. Monitoring and accountability systems to ensure compliance with quality standards;
4. Ongoing financial assistance that is linked to meeting quality standards; and
5. Engagement and outreach strategies (Child Trends, 2009).

A QRIS is used to evaluate and observe, recognize and reward, and support and communicate the level of quality in ECE programs. As defined by the QRIS National Learning Network, a well-developed QRIS includes the following:

- ECE program standards, although standards will vary among states;

- A common framework to link and align standards across the whole ECE system, including child care regulatory requirements, early learning guidelines, Head Start/Early Head Start Performance Standards, pre-kindergarten program standards, early intervention program standards, accreditation standards, and so forth;
- The alignment of policies and procedures across the whole ECE system;
- A method of educating and communicating consumers about quality ECE programs;
- A method of improving quality ECE programs;
- A culture of continuous quality improvement;
- A framework for investment in accountability;
- A tool used to align all current resources as well as additional investments toward system goals;
- A tool for benchmarking the progress a state has made toward increasing the availability of high-quality programs; and
- A tool for ECE system reform.

As states review their QRIS benchmarks are used to gauge a state's progress. Benchmarks may include the following:

- Increasing program participation rates including increasing participation rates across program types;
- Increasing quality of ECE programs overtime including increasing quality in programs that serve children of all: income levels, ethnicities, languages, abilities, age-groups and across different geographic regions of a state;
- Alignment of public and private funding to quality rating levels; and
- Increased investments in ECE programs statewide.

A QRIS takes a systems approach and uniformly addresses multiple aspects of ECE. A QRIS can include funding streams and a broad range of ECE program types include: (center-based child care, family child care, Head Start/Early Head Start, State Pre-Elementary or School District Pre-Elementary, Military Child Care, and Licensed School-Age). A QRIS is part of the quality improvement spectrum, and shares five (5) common elements:

1. **Quality Activities focus on:**
    a. Staff qualifications & Professional Development
    b. Learning Environments
    c. Use of curriculum and child assessment to fidelity
    d. Leadership/management
    e. Family engagement
2. **Accountability Measures**
    a. Teacher/child interactions
    b. Environment
    c. On-Site visits
    d. Self-assessment
    e. Professional development

3. **ECE program and teacher outreach and support**
    a. Training
    b. Mentoring/ coaching
    c. Technical assistance
4. **Financial incentives linked to compliance with standards**
    a. Increased provider reimbursement rates
    b. Quality grants
    c. Merit awards
    d. Wage incentives
    e. Scholarships
5. **Parent Support and Consumer education**
    a. Star rating system
    b. Website posting
    c. Media
    d. Certificates

A QRIS:

- Empowers families to become savvy consumers who choose high quality care for their children;
- Gives policymakers effective tools and monitoring information to improve ECE quality;
- Promotes accountability so that donors, legislators and taxpayers feel confident investing in quality;
- Gives ECE teachers and programs a roadmap to quality improvement; and
- Promotes the health and development of children in ECE.

Currently there are three rating structure approaches for determining rating steps.

1. Building Block Approach – requires the program to meet the level of rating in all categories of standards before receiving that rating.
2. Point Approach – allows the program to earn points in each category of standards, with the total of points determining the rating level of the program.
3. Hybrid Approach – includes building blocks (for some levels and/or some criteria) and points.

Additionally states vary in the amount of rating levels. A rating level refers to the number of levels included in the QRIS structure, such as 2 levels, 3 levels, 4 levels, etc. These levels are often designed with an easily understood symbol indicating ascending quality such as: stars; steps; levels; and bronze, silver, gold. The beginning level is usually defined by "being in good standing" with the licensing requirements or meeting licensing with some additional criteria.

Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) provides federal funding to states for child care subsidies for low-income families with children under age 13, as well as flexibility to pair state and federal funds to improve the quality of child care available to families within existing state and local systems. The goals of the CCDBG include:

1. Allow each state maximum flexibility in developing child care programs and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents within that state;
2. Promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions regarding the child care services that best suit their family's needs;
3. Encourage states to provide consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care services and to promote involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in child care settings;
4. Assist states in delivering high-quality, coordinated ECE services to maximize parents' options and support parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance;
5. Assist states in improving the overall quality of child care services and programs by implementing the health, safety, licensing, training, and oversight standards established in CCDBG and in state law (including state regulations);
6. Improve child care and development of participating children; and
7. Increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care setting.

With guidance and fiscal support from the CCDBG along with research and grassroots efforts of many state, local governments, and ECE Advisory Councils, there is a strong support for the development of and expansion of QRIS to increase access to high quality ECE programs for all children.

Alaska's Early Childhood Education System

As part of the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007, states were required to establish State Advisory Councils on ECE, which have also come to be known as Early Childhood Education Advisory Councils. Alaska's ECE advisory council is known as the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC). Alaska's ECE System receives guidance from the AECCC. The AECCC promotes positive development, improved health and mental health outcomes and school readiness for Alaska's children prenatal through age eight by creating a culturally responsive, comprehensive and accessible service delivery system that links service providers, empowers families, and engages communities. Under the Memorandum of Agreement signed by the Council members, the AECCC facilitates an integration and alignment of services, planning efforts, resources, policy development, and funding as well as strengthens connections between health, education and family support systems and public and private partners.

The AECCC is supported by the Governor's office under the direction and leadership of:

- Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and
- Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Learning (DEED)

Membership of the AECCC includes:

- Alaska Superintendents Association
- Association of Alaska School Boards
- Alaska Infant Learning Program Association
- Alaska Head Start Association
- Alaska Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- Alaska Native Health
- Mental Health Providers
- Public/ Private Partnership Organization
- Parent Representative
- Business Community (submitted by State Chamber of Commerce)
- Representative from the Governor's Office
- Commissioner, Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- Commissioner, Department of Public Safety
- Head Start Collaboration Director
- State Part C/ Early Intervention Program Manager
- Child Care Program Manager, Division of Public Assistance
- Early childhood education Comprehensive Systems Program Officer
- University of Alaska Systems (appointed by President)

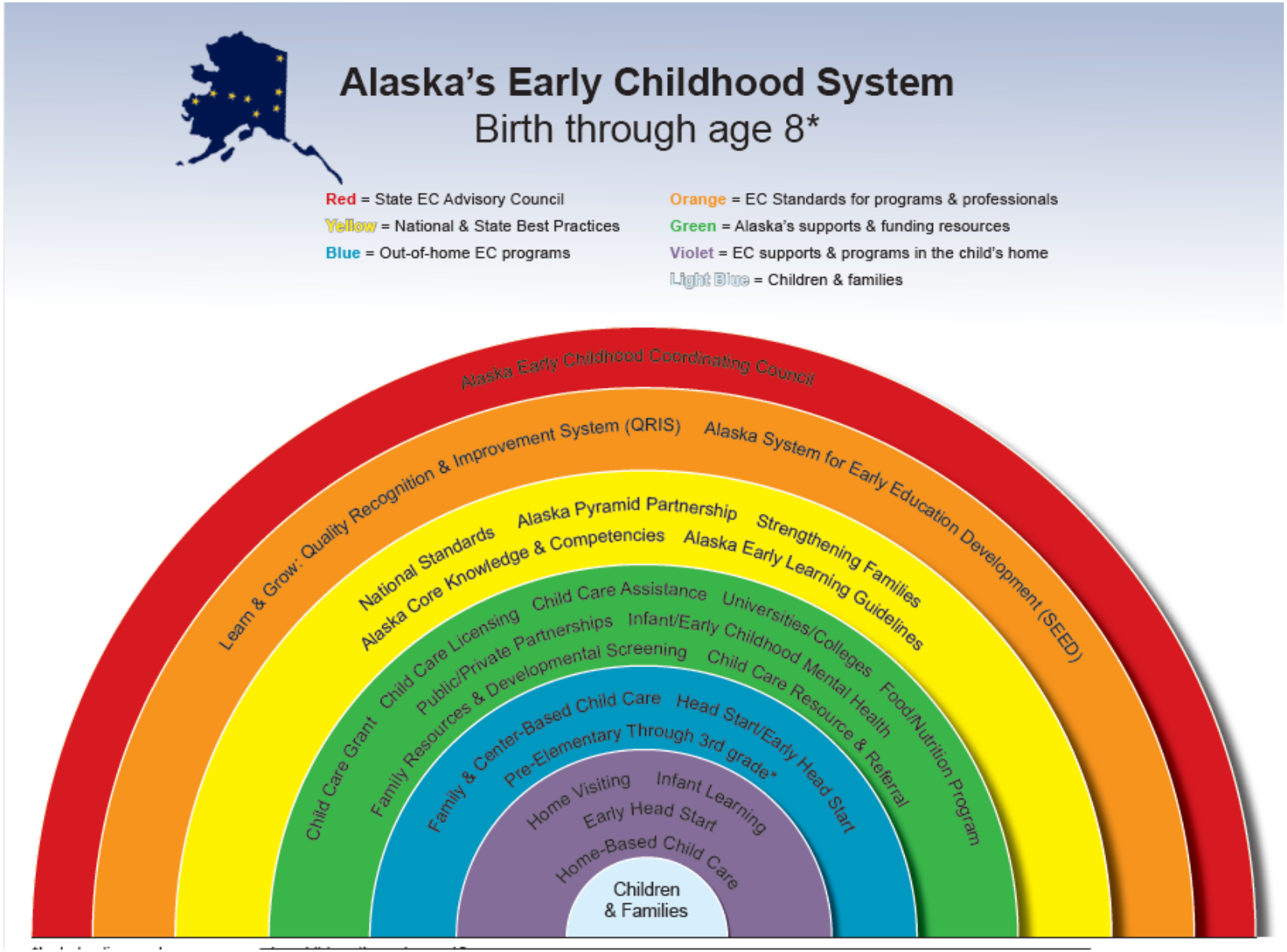
Within the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007, the AECCC Advisory Council is tasked with: conducting periodic needs assessment, identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination of ECE programs and services; developing recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in ECE programs; developing recommendations for a unified, statewide ECE data collection and professional development systems; assess the capacity and effectiveness of two and four year public and private institutions of higher education and make recommendations for improvement s to ECE standards; and developing high quality comprehensive early learning standards.

The AECCC sets priority areas of focus for ECE policy and planning. One of the AECCC priority areas is to support the implementation of a statewide Quality Recognition and Improvement System.

Table 1.1 Visual Depiction of Alaska's Early Childhood Education System

- Red: AECCC assisting and advising;
- Orange: How Learn & Grow and System for Education Early Development (SEED) help set the standards for ECE programs and quality standards for individual EC professionals;
- Yellow: National and local best practices;
- Green: Describes who is providing the services for children and families in Alaska;
- Blue: Out of home center based ECE programs;
- Purple: In home ECE programs and services; and
- Light Blue: Who this system is supporting.

Table 1.1: Visual Depiction of Alaska Early Childhood Education System



Section 7: Learn & Grow Purpose

Learn & Grow is Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS). The mission (purpose), values, beliefs, guiding principles, and outcomes of Learn & Grow are as follows:

Learn & Grow Mission
To advance the quality of ECE to foster the success of children birth through age 12.

Learn & Grow Values

- Quality
- Improvement
- Relationships
- Resilient

Learn & Grow Beliefs

- Healthy communities equals healthy families
- Alaska needs more quality ECE programs
- ECE is a critical window of opportunity
- Alaska needs a strong workforce (now and in the future)
- EC professionals are a catalyst for change
- Relationships matter
- Quality ECE is diverse
- Children are precious
- Families are irreplaceable

Learn & Grow Guiding Principles

- Quality ECE is rooted in respect for diversity;
- Use of best practices ensures strength-based approaches to create nurturing quality environments;
- Creating a quality ECE system requires work in partnership with multiple stakeholders;
- Families need information when considering ECE programs for their child;
- Continuous quality improvement needs to be feasible and achievable for programs;
- Quality ECE is an investment now and in the future. It is an economic imperative; and
- Retention of a highly qualified ECE workforce is imperative to building and maintaining quality.

Long Term Outcomes
Learn & Grow is a statewide quality system that works in partnership with other early childhood organizations and initiatives to collectively work toward a shared vision and outcomes for early childhood in Alaska.

Learn & Grow Short Term Goals

1. Learn & Grow will have sustainable, blended funding to support implementation of Learn & Grow for all ECE and licensed school age programs.
2. More ECE programs participate in Learn & Grow and continue to advance through the levels of quality.
3. More families are choosing an ECE program based on quality indicators specified in the Learn & Grow framework.
4. ECE programs develop a culture of continuous quality improvement and utilize the available supports and resources available to assist them.

Learn & Grow Long Term Goals

1. All children have access to high quality ECE environments that foster social emotional and developmental skills to prepare them for kindergarten through high school and life.
2. ECE programs use evidence based, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate curriculum and child assessment tools, and program practices in conjunction with a trained coached to support positive adult-child interactions and improve child outcomes.
3. ECE leaders have access to resources to support their programs active engagement in continuous quality improvement (CQI) activities and increase teacher retention, resiliency, and leadership skills.
4. Families are actively participating in their child's ECE and after-school experiences, have access to community supports and resources, and help to successfully transition children to kindergarten.
5. Families and communities can identify and advocate for affordable and high quality ECE.

In partnership with the System for Early Education Development (SEED) Learn & Grow Helps to Impact on the Following Outcomes *(Early Childhood Educator Qualifications & Professionals Development is a quality domain of Learn & Grow)*

1. Alaska ECE workforce is resilient and can develop their leadership skills through access to professional development, training, and educational supports.
2. ECE teachers, working in high quality ECE programs, earn a wage compensatory to their professional achievements.

Learn & Grow in partnership with Alaska's Early Childhood Education and Community Partner's Work to:

1. Assure communities are healthy and have a sustainable ECE workforce.
2. Identify and provide necessary resources and support for children and families to be safe, healthy, and resilient.
3. Increase the number of children who are more prepared to enter and succeed in the P-12 educational system.

Section 8: Organization and Management of Learn & Grow

Learn & Grow is located within and managed by **thread**. **thread**, in partnership with the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office (CCPO) and the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) provide funding for the development and implementation of Learn & Grow for all State of Alaska and MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and Homes, Licensed Early Head Start or Head Starts, and Licensed Pre-elementary and Pre-School Special Education programs. The State of Alaska Child Care Program Office and the MOA are the oversite agencies for any early childhood program who obtains a child care license. A child care program must have a state or MOA child care license. DEED is the oversight agency for Pre-Elementary, Head Start, and Pre-school Special Education programs and issues the approval to operate for these programs. Head Start and Pre-elementary are also welcome to become licensed through the CCPO office. CCPO, thread, DEED, Tribal Child Care, Head Start, and the Alaska Afterschool Network are members of the Learn & Grow Executive Committee responsible for the planning and development of other ECE user types to participate in Learn & Grow across all five levels of quality.

Learn & Grow is a comprehensive quality improvement system for all ECE programs. Representatives from several organizations and agencies (System Partners) are participating in the development and implementation of Learn & Grow.

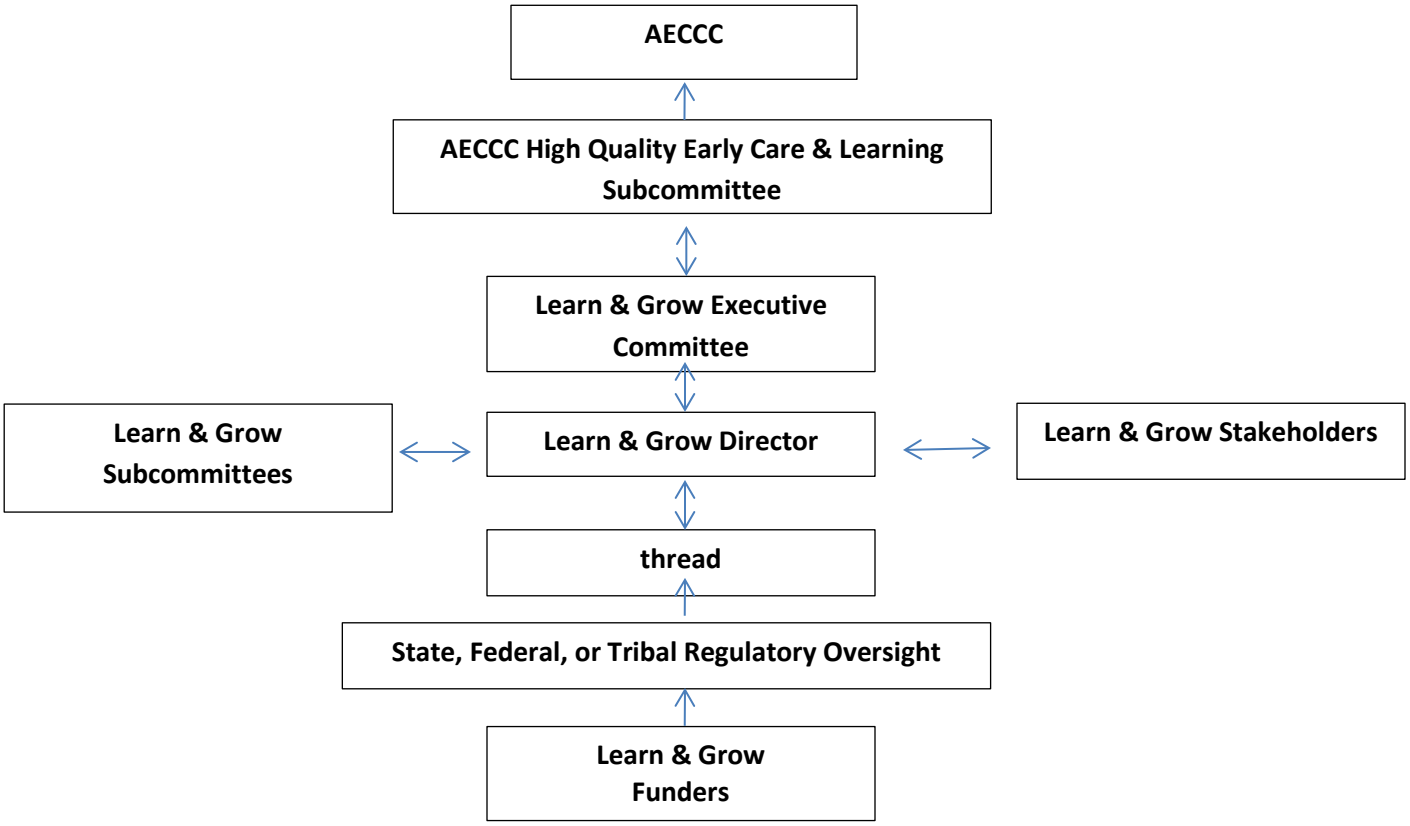
System Partners

- **thread**, Alaska's Child Care Resource & Referral Network
- State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services
    - Child Care Program Office
    - Office of Children's Services, Early Childhood Education Comprehensive Systems (ECCS)
    - Senior and Disabilities Services, Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program
- State of Alaska, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
    - Pre-Elementary
    - 619 Preschool Special Education
    - Head Start Collaboration Office
- Municipality of Anchorage, Child Care Licensing Program
- System for Early Education Development (SEED) Professional Development Committee
- University of Alaska
- Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)
- Alaska Afterschool Network
- Best Beginnings
- Alaska Child Care and Development Fund Tribal Organizations
- Administration for Children & Families, Office of Child Care, Region X
- Region X and XI Technical Assistance
- Alaska Head Start Association
- Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children, and affiliates

- Alaska Family Child Care Association
- Licensed child care programs and teachers
- Head Start and Early Head Start administrators
- Pre-elementary administrators and teachers
- Licensed school-age programs and administrators

Learn & Grow's Governance structure includes the following committees:

Learn & Grow Organization and Communication Flow Chart



Committee Roles & Responsibilities

Learn & Grow Director

Roles and responsibilities

- Administration and oversight of Learn & Grow
- Inform and align Learn & Grow with statewide ECE and school age systems goals
- Serve on each Learn & Grow subcommittee and as a liaison to Executive and Stakeholders Committees
- Develop charters and set meeting agendas with input from committees/subcommittees, as applicable.

- Participate in the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC) High Quality Early Care and Learning Committee to inform on Learn & Grow strategic plan and annual operating activities.

Stakeholder Committee

Roles and responsibilities

- Active member of Subcommittees when applicable
- Be an ambassador for quality ECE and school age programs
- Help strategize on specific requests associated with implementation of strategic plan and annual operating activities to provide continuity in the development and implementation of Learn & Grow
- Commit to serving on subcommittee for a two year term as long as willing and able with option for renewal.

Membership

Learn & Grow will attempt to include the following members.

- Learn & Grow Director
- **thread** CEO
- CCPO Manager
- CCPO Program Coordinator
- SEED Director
- Head Start Collaboration Director
- DEED Pre-elementary Program Manager
- SOA/MOA CC licensing representative
- Alaska Afterschool Network Director
  AIAN Tribal Child Care representative
- Region X and XI HS Association representatives.
- 619 representative
- Infant Learning representative
- OCS representative
- ECE Mental Health representative
- Title I or Migrant Ed (Local SD or State) representative
- AECCC/ECE subcommittee representative
- Military Child Care representative
- **thread** Director of Quality Services
- Up to 5 additional members from the following: foundations, local government, business members, community members if not already identified as one of the representatives from above

Executive Committee

Roles and responsibilities

- Oversight of the development, implementation, scale up and sustainability of framework
- Oversight of strategic plan
- Oversight and prioritization of annual operating activities
- Oversight of data and evaluation
- Oversight of the governance structure and process
- Be ambassador of all consensus decisions made in committee
- Attend regularly scheduled meetings and when unavailable notify and provide written or verbal feedback to L&G Director in lieu of attendance
- Commit to attendance on the committee as long as they are in their current position
- Communicate Learn & Grow strategic plan activities back to organizational leaders to help inform department level policy decisions and ECE state systems alignment

Current Membership

Position Title	Role
Learn & Grow Director	Program facilitator and management
thread CEO	Fiscal sponsor and implementation arm
CCPO Manager	CCDF Administrator, policy, & funding
CCPO Program Coordinator	CCDF Quality
SEED Director	Workforce/Professional Development
thread Director of Quality Services	Responsible for overseeing implementation of Learn & Grow services offered by **thread**
Early childhood education & Licensed School Age Program Type Representatives	
Child Care Licensing	Liaison for State and MOA licensed child care program types
Early Head Start & Head Start Collaboration Director (s)	Liaison for Early Head Start and Head Start
Pre-Elementary Manager	Pre-elementary and 619 preschool programs and help guide DEED Policy & Funding
School-Age	Liaison for licensed school age programs
AIAN Tribal Child Care	Liaison for tribal child care programs

Subcommittees

Roles and responsibilities

- Discuss, develop, and make recommendations as applicable to the subcommittee focus area to the Learn & Grow Executive Committee
- Review other states QRIS work and national research to inform discussion
- Use strategic plan and annual operating activities to guide work
- Commit to participate in the subcommittee work as long as subcommittee is active
- Members who cannot attend at least 70% of scheduled meetings will be asked to designate a representative to attend in their place

Membership

- Subcommittees and members exist based on strategic plan areas in development

Learn & Grow Funders

Roles and responsibilities

- If applicable, funder will identify criteria, performance measures/indicators, reporting etc.
- to be met in order to receive funds
- Oversight and monitoring as applicable as funds provided

Membership

- Financial investors of Learn & Grow
- In-kind supporters

Regulatory Oversight of Participating Programs *(Federal, State, or Tribal)*

Roles and responsibilities

- Regulatory bodies set the foundation for an eligible ECE or school age program

- Regulatory bodies work in collaboration with funders and statewide ECE professional development and quality systems to assure a scaffolding of quality that is feasible and achievable for all ECE or school-age programs and developmentally appropriate

Membership

- Department of Health and Social Services
- Department of Education and Early Development
- Tribal Child Care
- Military Child Care

thread

Roles and responsibilities

- House and manage Learn & Grow as fiscal sponsor
- Act as lead implementation arm including providing required training, technical assistance, coaching, assessments and verifications, financial supports, and alignment and infrastructure of SEED
- Evaluation and reporting
- Maintain a Learn & Grow website, resources, and outreach materials
- Work in partnership with regulatory bodies
- Serve as a liaison to funders for Learn & Grow

Communication Flow

- Funders provide financial resources that may include specific grant requirements and activities. Funders will communicate with **thread** with specific guidance associated with goals of funding
- **thread** will communicate with Learn & Grow Director and ensure all funding requirements are met through the work of Learn & Grow
- Strategic plan and annual operating activities are determined by Learn & Grow Executive Committee
- Subcommittee work is guided by strategic plans and annual operating activities. Learn & Grow Director will develop a charter to guide and facilitate Subcommittee work
- Learn & Grow Director will share recommendations from Subcommittees and all other updates during Executive Committee meetings
- Executive Committee members will discuss recommendations and either accept or reject and send back via Learn & Grow Director to Subcommittees with feedback and/or additional guidance
- Learn & Grow Executive Committee will identify content to share with Stakeholder Committee and assure Stakeholder Committee has accurate and sufficient information to be ambassadors of Learn & Grow
- Stakeholder Committee will provide feedback and input at yearly face to face meetings
- The Learn & Grow Director will participate in the AECCC High Quality Early Care and Education Subcommittee meeting to inform on Learn & Grow strategic plan and annual operating activities and to bring forward recommendations regarding Learn & Grow
- The AECCC High Quality Early Care and Learning Committee will bring forward recommendations regarding Learn & Grow to the AECCC

Decision-Making Procedures

- Learn & Grow's preferred method of decision-making is consensus.
- Consensus is defined as all members are in agreement to move forward with full support or agreement to move forward with comments/concerns notated.
- Decisions may be brought to the Executive Committee for discussion, with prior review and recommendations formed by Subcommittees.
- No decision will be made at an Executive Committee meeting with less than 50% +1 in attendance.
- When a decision cannot be made by consensus, the Executive Committee will ask for additional information from Subcommittee and/or conduct additional research.
- The topic will be added to the following Executive Committee meeting for additional discussion to inform the decision-making process.

Section 9: Learn & Grow Program Tools and Resources

A variety of tools and resources are available to support Learn & Grow services. These tools include: Child Care Aware of America National Data System (NDS); State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, CCPO Integrated Child Care Information System (ICCIS); Interpreter Services; SEED Registry; SEED Training and Trainer Approval System; SEED Career Ladder; **thread** and Learn & Grow websites, and Department of Education and Early Development (DEED).

Child Care Aware of America National Data System (NDS)

NDS is **thread's** data system that holds ECE program information, consultation and program service documentation. **thread** staff are the primary user of NDS.

State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Child Care Program Office (CCPO) Integrated Child Care Information System (ICCIS), Website

ICCIS is the database system used to track ECE programs history and compliance with child care licensing regulations, ECE program demographics, and the voluntary child care programs they are participating in (i.e. Alaska IN!, Child Care Assistance Program, Child Care Grant).

CCPO website http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/ccare/default.aspx houses information on how to find a child care provider, information for child care programs such as licensing, child care assistance, and the child care grant, and information for families such as child care assistance, PASS programs, Alaska IN! and other resources.

Interpreter Services

If an individual is not able to or is limited in speaking, reading, or writing English, or the individual requests interpreter services, translation services are available to assist in the provision of services.

System for Early Education Development (SEED)

SEED is Alaska's statewide ECE professional development system located within and managed by **thread**. SEED is overseen by the SEED Professional Development Committee (PDC). The SEED PDC includes a cross-sector of ECE stakeholders, who provide leadership and stewardship for SEED. Several components of EC professional development are managed by SEED. These include the SEED Career Ladder, SEED Registry, Alaska's Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies, Professional Development Reimbursements, and the SEED Trainer and Training Approval System.

SEED Career Ladder

The SEED Career Ladder is Alaska's professional development pathway articulating advancement in the ECE profession. It is an integrated common system for all EC professionals that recognize credit-based education and community based training. The SEED Career Ladder can be accessed by going to https://www.threadalaska.org/seed/career-pathways/career-ladder under the SEED Registry tab.

SEED Registry

The SEED Registry is a member-based database supporting Alaska's EC professionals. The SEED Registry tracks the workforce's ongoing education and training through the SEED database to:

- Document and quantify educational growth and accomplishments;
- Provide information to employers and parents about the EC professional credentials of staff working in all ECE program settings;
- Provide critical information to legislators and policy makers about the EC professionals working in the ECE field;
- Drive quality and accountability for EC professionals and programs; and
- Bring increased recognition, professionalism and compensation to the ECE field.

The SEED registry provides a certificate to SEED Registry members verifying placement on the SEED Career Ladder.

Recommendation: Programs are encouraged to make SEED Registration a part of their new employee hiring process. Program administrators may want to request a copy of the employees SEED certificate to assist with keeping track of SEED expiration dates.

Alaska's Early Care & Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies

Alaska's Early Care & Learning (ECL) Core Knowledge and Competencies (AK-ECLCKC) provide information about what ECE professionals who work with young children need to know, understand, and demonstrate to best facilitate children's learning and development. It is also a resource document for ECE professionals who work in administrative, policy, higher education, and teaching roles. AK-ECLCKC's create a foundation for the SEED Professional Development system by providing a road map for curriculum development, organizing and approving training and trainers, informing academic coursework, and providing a basis for the levels on the SEED Career Ladder. The AK-ECLCKCs can be accessed at https://www.**thread**alaska.org/seed-home

SEED Training and Trainer Approval System

A Training and Trainer Approval System provides a process for quality assurance for both individuals who provide training in Alaska and the training they deliver. There is an application process for both trainers and training; and the Training and Trainer Approval System is voluntary.

The Training and Trainer Approval System consists of two components: Training Approval and Trainer Approval.

- **Training Approval** ensures training content reflects current research, best practice and aligns with the SEED Registry, AK-ECLCKC and the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines. Information about the Early Learning Guidelines can be accessed at: https://education.alaska.gov/publications/earlylearningguidelines.pdf. Training is delivered in a way that reflects how adults learn. Trainers can submit their training curricula for approval for their training to be SEED-approved. Training also needs to be SEED-approved to qualify for professional development funding through **thread.** Go to https://www.threadalaska.org/seed/trainer-approval-system for additional information about the SEED Training Approval Process.

- **Trainer Approval** process promotes consistent standards for trainers. Trainers have the opportunity to document their experience and formal education. Currently there are three Trainer Levels: Provisional, Basic, and Specialized. Trainers will be assigned a Trainer Certification based on their education, training and experience: this can help guide EC professionals in choosing training opportunities. The Trainer Approval system will be phased in to allow trainers time to meet the requirements. There will be a renewal process. Trainers can be approved at new levels if they have met the requirements for that new level. Go to https://www.threadalaska.org/seed/trainer-approval-process for additional information about the SEED Trainer Approval Process.

thread Website

The **thread** website can be accessed at https://www.**thread**alaska.org. **threads** website has links for families to find child care, community resources, employment opportunities, statewide training and professional development, ECE advocacy opportunities and information on how to identify quality practices in ECE.

Learn & Grow Website

The Learn & Grow website can be accessed at https://www.aklearnandgrow.org. The Learn & Grow website contains information for ECE programs and professionals, families, and partnering agencies. Specific information such the Learn & Grow Framework (standards, activities, domains), how to enroll, contact information, data and reports, and research information can also be found on the Learn & Grow website.

Department of Education & Early Development (DEED)

Approval to Operate

All school district and Head Start programs with five or more students 3-5 years of age are required to annually apply to the Department of Education and Early Development for Approval to Operate.

This may be completed at the DEED Early Learning Application for Approval to Operate webpage https://education.alaska.gov/earlylearning. Programs sign assurances stating they will assess each child to determine their developmental progress in all domain areas of Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines (ELG). Programs also submit an end-of-the-year report citing the number of students, classrooms, and sites present at the end of the school year. This report may be completed at the DEED Early Learning Approval to Operate Annual Report webpage and must be submitted no later than June 30th. (Under regulations 4 AAC 60.010 through 4 AAC 60.180)

Alaska CLIMBS

DEED sponsors a license to one assessment tool, currently MyTeachingStrategies. This is available at no-cost to school district and Head Start ECE programs. This tool uses observations to assess each child's skills. This information is then used to develop informed lesson plans for student. DEED provides training and technical assistance to programs for using this tool within the Alaska CLIMBS framework.

Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP)

DEED conducts an annual developmental profile for students entering school – typically at kindergarten, but at first grade for those students whose parents opt out of kindergarten. The ADP collects data on 13 goals across 5 domains from Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines. The five domains are:

a. Physical Well-being, Health, & Motor Development,
b. Social & Emotional Development,
c. Approaches to Learning,
d. Cognition & General Knowledge,
e. Communication, Language, & Literacy.

With each of the thirteen goals, teachers conduct observations of their students in the classroom and identify student skills as "Consistently Demonstrates", "Progressing", or "Does Not Demonstrate." DEED provides an annual report citing statewide, districtwide, and school-wide percentages of students who are identified as "Consistently Demonstrating" in 11/13 and 13/13 goals. (Under regulation 4 AAC 06.712)

Alaska Early Learning Guidelines

The Alaska Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) were published in 2007 with the intent of providing to people who care for and teach young children a resource for guiding each child's development and learning. The ELG are cited in state regulation **4 AAC 60.170**, where it is mandated a school district or Head Start program must implement the ELG in their early learning program and assess each child to determine the child's progress or status on all domain areas of development described in the guidelines. The ELG are currently being updated and are expected to be shared with the public in 2020.

Section 10: Rights Under the Learn & Grow Program

Learn & Grow and SEED are located and managed by **thread** and all use the same data base, paper and electronic filing system. Therefore Learn & Grow, SEED, and **thread** share the same

confidentiality, data privacy, identifier, security protocol, data, and appeals policies and procedures. All staff in Section 10 will be referred to as **thread** staff rather than Learn & Grow because they are employed by **thread** and follow threads policies and procedures.

Confidentiality and Data Privacy

Confidentiality is maintained by **thread** staff for the benefit of all Learn & Grow participating programs. All **thread** staff will be required to sign **thread's** confidentiality statement upon employment. The only data retained by **thread**, not of a confidential nature, is that provided by child care providers and programs that use the referral process and the names of **thread's** members and contributors. Access to data is limited to **thread** staff and volunteers and controlled by **thread's** Chief Executive Officer.

Reference to any client information is strictly prohibited, except necessary communication of such information among staff and volunteers in the performance of their jobs. The only exceptions to the forgoing are:

- To qualified personnel/contractors for the purpose of conducting scientific research;
- Management audits, financial audits, or program evaluation, but such personnel/contractors may not identify, directly or indirectly, any individual client in any report, audit or evaluation or otherwise disclose client identities in any manner;
- If authorized by an appropriate court order issued by a judge or magistrate of the State of Alaska;
- To comply with state or municipal child abuse reporting requirements;
- To confirm that a practitioner is in the SEED Registry or not and if they are active or inactive; and
- To comply with a request from the State of Alaska CCPO or MOA Child Care Licensing Program.

The decision to release information which falls into one of the exceptions to the strict nondisclosure of confidential information may only be made by **thread's** Chief Executive Officer. Any request for disclosure of information which may fall within one of the exceptions must be brought to the immediate attention of **thread's** Chief Executive Officer.

Clients may authorize disclosure of confidential information. The consent to disclose confidential information must be in writing and contain the name of the employee or volunteer authorized to make such disclosure, the name or title of the person or organization to whom the disclosure may be made, the name of the client, purpose or need for the disclosure, the extent or nature of the information to be disclosed, a statement that the consent is subject to revocation at any time, the specified date, event and condition upon which it will expire without express revocation, the date on which the consent is signed, and the signature of the client.

Whenever information from **threads** confidential data is requested by any person or organization, the request for information must be in writing.

Sensitive Identifiers

Only the last five (5) digits of Social Security Numbers are stored in the thread data system when individual ECE professionals are applying or updating their SEED Registry profile. Paper applications received containing complete Social Security Numbers shall have the first four numbers redacted from the document prior to storage in paper or digital files. The SEED Registry will generate a unique username for each provider and instructor in the system that is proprietary to this system.

Confirmation of Identity

thread staff working within SEED will confirm an ECE professionals identity over the phone by asking the caller to provide their date of birth plus the last five (5) digits of their Social Security Number before releasing any information to the individual ECE professional.

ECE programs or individual providers must complete a documents release form prior to the release of individual information to DEED, CCPO or MOA licensing.

Database information or paper files may not be removed from the premises aside from disaster recovery backup processes or requested for grant monitoring purposes.

All files with personal and program information will be stored in locked file cabinets. The office site will be locked and secured during non-business hours.

Staff will use a cross-cut shredding machine to shred reports and inactive provider files. Shredded material will be picked up by a recycling service.

Basic information on Licensed Child Care in the State of Alaska is available to the public at: http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/ccare/default.aspx. SEED's Registry will refer request for program information to this site.

Other information such as training records and demographic information (such as program name, administrator, number of classrooms, names of individual professionals, etc.) is confidential and will be shared only in aggregate form or in a manner which prevents individuals from being personally identified. For example, **thread** may create reports for legislators and policy makers about the number of child care professionals in our state or a general profile of training among all child care providers in Alaska.

Security of Electronic Files, Data Backup and Storage Policy

thread data system is called National Data System (NDS) created by Child Care Aware of America, **thread's** national organization. NDS has established policies and procedures for the physical, router, and server configuration security to ensure:

- Access to server is logged or protected;
- Security patches are installed on the server;
- All servers are located in the Cloud;
- All security-related Logs are kept according to NDS policy;

- Backups occur via Could: Daily, weekly, and monthly; and
- Corrective measures are prescribed as needed for security-related events such as viruses and evidence of unauthorized access.

Data Backup & Storage

NDS and **thread** provide services for the retrieval and restoration of information in the event of a natural disaster, equipment failure, intentional destruction of data, and/or accidental loss of files. Both NDS, **thread** servers, and Learn & Grow program data stored on a private Smart Sheet account are to be backed up include the file server, the mail server, and the web server. Data backup includes user data stored on the hard drive, system state data, and the registry. The retention period for the weekly backup is one month; monthly backup is six months, and seven years for archiving.

Data Transfer Policies and Procedures

Data may be shared and transferred as determined appropriate by the State of Alaska CCPO or their designees (**thread** and therefore Learn & Grow and SEED are designees of CCPO) with the exception of personally identifying information such as social security numbers.

Civil Rights

Staff administering any aspect of **thread** services, including Learn & Grow or SEED, will not discriminate against any applicant or participant, including, but not limited to, the: application submission or withdrawal; approval of providers; issuance of program supports; request to discontinue technical assistance; choice of participating early childhood education program or professional; request for an appeal or the conduct of any other program service, for reasons of age, race, color, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin or political belief. Sexual orientation and gender are protected class in Anchorage.

A complaint is any clear expression by the complainant or person acting for him/her, to the effect that he or she believes himself or herself to be the object of discrimination based on age, race, color, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin, or political belief. Individuals or programs who feel their civil rights have been violated please go to http://www.dot.state.ak.us/cvlrts/complaint.shtml to file a complaint.

Learn & Grow's Appeal Process

If an applicant receives their Learn & Grow Recognition Certificate and believes their ECE program was placed at an inaccurate level they may request an appeal. An ECE program taking part in the appeal process will have their Learn & Grow Recognition Certificate placed on hold until an appeal decision is made.

An ECE program may pursue a Learn & Grow recognition level appeal for the following reasons:

- ECE program claims they have met the quality activity area associated with the level being appealed within the designated timeframe.

The Learn & Grow appeals process does not address the following scenarios but could be addressed through a grievance process.

- To provide new evidence or documentation;
- Additional information gathered by ECE program after on-site evaluation visits;
- Variability of time spent in classrooms;
- Typical staff not present during visit;

Appeal or Compliant Submission Process

The Learn & Grow Appeal/Compliant form and supporting documentation must be received by Learn & Grow 30 days of notification received date. Learn & Grow assumes no responsibilities for the delays caused by any mail delivery service and a read receipt email notification. Materials received after 5:00pm AKST on the last work day of a month will not be considered.

An ECE program must submit the Learn & Grow appeals form to the Learn & Grow Director, 3350 Commercial Dr. Suite 203, Anchorage, AK 99501 or email to info@aklearnandgrow.org explaining the reason for the appeal. The appeal form can be found at https://www.aklearnandgrow.org Documentation related to Learn & Grow quality standards associated with the Level being appealed should be included. A copy of the letter along with all appeal documents will be placed in the ECE program's file.

Process for Reviewing an Appeal or Compliant

The Learn & Grow Director will review the applicant's file, and if needed, the applicant will be notified if further documentation, such as transcripts, licensing information, etc. is needed in order to review and assign an accurate level. The Learn & Grow Director will convene the Appeal Committee that may consist of representatives from the State of Alaska CCPO and/or MOA Child Care Licensing Program other than the assigned ECE program's Child Care Licensing Specialist; Learn & Grow Director; SEED Director; DEED representative; and the **thread** PDS supervisor to review the applicant's file. A decision will be made within twenty (20) business days of receiving the appeal or compliant and written notification of decision will be sent to the ECE program or individual.

Appeal Granted

If the appeal is granted, all Learn & Grow verification documentation (**thread** data system (NDS) or SEED Registry, and ECE program's electronic file stored on **thread** servers, along with a new Learn & Grow Level Recognition Certificate) will be updated within thirty (30) business days. The appeal applicants will be notified by letter of their current standing within the Learn & Grow Levels of quality framework.

Denial of appeal

If the appeal is denied, the decision is final and the ECE program will be notified in writing of the Learn & Grow Appeal Committee's decision including information about why the appeal was denied. If the ECE program wishes to submit for re-verification, they may do so no sooner than 90 calendar days from the date of the denial. ECE programs must submit a new Continuous Quality

Improvement Plan (CQIP) describing plans for how it will meet the specific quality standards associated with the level for which they are seeking re-verification. A **thread** PDS may be available to assist the program with the QIP revisions.

Section 11: Responsibilities Under the Learn & Grow Program

The following organizations and groups of individuals have unique roles and responsibilities to help support the successful implementation of Learn & Grow. The current organizations and groups include: **thread** which manages Learn & Grow and SEED; State of Alaska CCPO and MOA Child Care Licensing Program who provide oversight to licensed and approved child care programs including Licensed Early Head Start and Licensed School-age programs, DEED approved Head Start, Pre-Elementary and Preschool Special Education Programs and parents.

thread Child Care Resource & Referral Network

thread, Alaska's statewide Child Care Resource and Referral (CC&R) Network is comprised of three regional offices that provide services to ECE programs, children, and families throughout the state of Alaska. Offices are located in Anchorage, Juneau, Fairbanks, Wasilla, Kenai, and Ketchikan. The Southcentral **thread** office is located in Anchorage; the Southeast **thread** office is located in Juneau at the SEA-AEYC office; the Northern **thread** office is located in Fairbanks at Thrivealaska. The three regional **thread** offices receive oversight from the State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Assistance (DPA), CCPO, and the CCR&R grant. The CCPO receives oversight and management from the federal Office of Child Care who administers the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and is located within the Administration for Children and Families.

thread's responsibilities include the management and oversight of:

- System of Education Early Development (SEED) and Learn & Grow;
- Providing training and technical assistance to ECE programs enrolled in Learn & Grow;
- Maintaining staff capacity for interrater reliable services for the Environment Rating Scale.
- Tracking and distributing financial supports to ECE programs and early educators including: professional development reimbursement, travel reimbursement, and Learn & Grow Quality Recognition Awards; and
- Data system for ECE programs and educator data and documentation.

thread Professional Development Specialist

thread will employ qualified Professional Development specialist to provide the supports and services for ECE programs and educators participating in Learn & Grow. **thread** specialist receive ongoing training and build capacity to deliver training, technical assistance, assessment for participating ECE programs and educators to implement Learn & Grow.

System for Early Education Development (SEED) and Learn & Grow

Two systems under the management of **thread**, work together to carry out Alaska's quality ECE initiatives: System for Early Education Development (SEED) and Learn & Grow. SEED supports individual EC professionals, while Learn & Grow supports ECE programs.

System for Early Education Development (SEED)

SEED is responsible for managing activities related to the Staff Qualifications and Professional Development Quality Standards of Learn & Grow. Specific SEED responsibilities include:

- Maintaining new and renewed EC professionals in the SEED Registry
- Ensuring SEED Career Ladder, SEED Training and Trainer Approval System, and Alaska's Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies align with Learn & Grow Quality Standards.

- Issuing the EC Administrator Credential certificate in connection with the SEED Training and Trainer Approval and
- Overseeing the **thread** database training tracker systems

Learn & Grow

Learn & Grow works to support ECE program quality, aligning resources, funding, data systems and professional development to provide a comprehensive and unified quality improvement system. Learn & Grow leverages staff and resources from **thread** and SEED. In addition to SEED managing all of the components related to the Staff Qualifications and Professional Development Quality Standards, SEED and Learn & Grow work together to verify the quality recognition levels of enrolled ECE programs.

The Learn & Grow verifier (Statewide Systems Coordinator-Learn & Grow) is responsible for issuing Level Recognition Certificate(s) by cross-referencing all program documentation from the SEED Registry, **thread** NDS database, and ICCIS systems including:

- SEED registration and levels of all program staff;
- Completion of administrator credential;
- ECE program licensing status and type;
- Completed Continuous Quality Improvement Plan;
- Lead teacher and leadership team training requirements;
- Program philosophy statement; **Self- reflection** of Environment Rating Scale (ERS) for each classroom and a classroom action plan completed in conjunction with the program's **thread** professional development specialist **OR CLASS or ERS assessment** from a certified CLASS or ERS inter-rater reliable assessor in conduction with classroom action plan or equivalent.
- Issue Level Recognition Certificate(s).

The Director of Quality Services is responsible for:

- Assuring assessors maintain inter-rater reliability on all three tools: Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-3), EC Environment Rating Scale-3 (ECERS-3), Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-3) or CLassroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Training on ERS or CLASS assessment and report writing; and
- Scheduling of all official ERS or CLASS assessments statewide.

State of Alaska Child Care Program Office (CCPO)

The State of Alaska CCPO office receives funding from the federal Office of Child Care to administer the activities specified in the Child Care and Development Block Grant, (CCDBG). The State of Alaska Child Care Program Office provides oversight and monitoring of the Child Care Resource and Referral grant which includes support to SEED and Learn & Grow services. The CCPO also manages the Child Care Licensing and Child Care Assistance Programs for all licensed and approved child care programs throughout the state. The State CCPO office sub grants to the MOA Child Care Licensing Program to provide licensing functions of child care programs within the MOA.

State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)

The State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development manages all Head Start and Pre-Elementary (special education and regular education) programs. The Head Start Collaboration Director is located at DEED and is responsible for assisting Region X Head Start programs with guidance and technical assistance to meet their Federal Head Start Performance Standards to Region X Head Start grantee applicants, and collaborate with State QRIS leadership to explore align Head Start Performance standards with state QRIS standards and activities to assure alignment. The Head Start Collaboration Director also manages Alaska CLIMBS- Alaska Early Childhood Child Assessment and Monitoring System. The Director of Pre-Elementary programs works to assure DEED pre-school activities and QRIS quality standards and activities are in alignment and manages the state funding for Pre-elementary and Head Start programs.

Child Care Licensing Staff

Child care licensing staff will notify Learn & Grow/ **thread** of changes in licensing status of ECE programs on a monthly basis, or as soon as possible in the event of an enforcement action involving suspension or closure of a child care program.

Municipality of Anchorage Child Care Licensing Program

The MOA Child Care Licensing Program is responsible for licensing and monitoring of Anchorage Municipality Child Care Programs. The child care programs within the MOA must meet or exceed state licensing regulations.

MOA CCL Program staff will notify Learn& Grow/**thread** of changes in licensing status of programs on a monthly basis, or as soon as possible in the event of an enforcement action involving suspension or closure of a child care program.

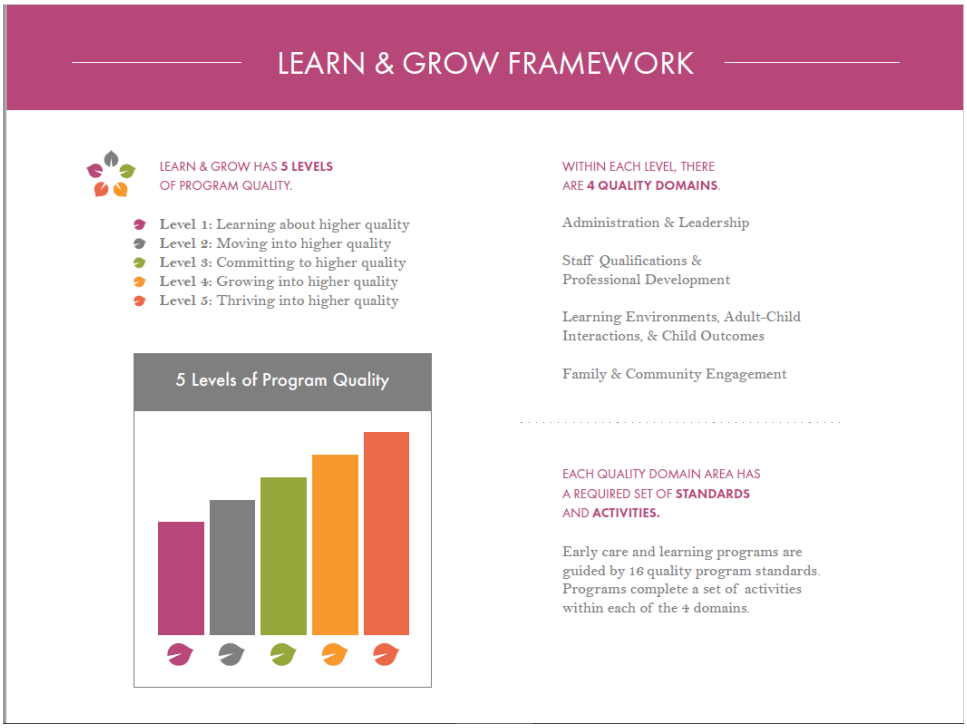
Early Childhood Education Programs

Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, Homes, Early Head Starts, Head Starts, and Pre-elementary programs participating in Learn & Grow are responsible for maintaining their child care license or DEED certification in good standing and notifying Learn & Grow staff of any changes regarding their license/certification. These ECE programs must work cooperatively with Learn & Grow and **thread** to support their continuous improvement goals.

Families

Family's responsibilities include selecting an eligible ECE program, with assistance from the Alaska statewide Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network, if needed, and working in partnership with their ECE program and educators to support the needs of their child(ren).

Section 12: Learn & Grow Quality Framework



There are several layers to the Learn & Grow quality framework:

1) Five quality levels;
2) Four quality domain areas nested in each level of quality;
3) 16 quality standards associated with one of the four quality domain areas;
4) Activities at each level of quality that progressively work toward achieving one of the 16 standards.

Five Levels of Quality

Four Quality Domains

1) Administration & Leadership
2) Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Qualifications and Professional Development
3) Learning Environment, Adult-Child Interactions, and Child Outcomes
4) Family & Community Engagement

Quality Standards Associated with Each Domain

Administration & Leadership

Active engagement in continuous quality improvement takes specific dedication, leadership, support, and knowledge of program administrators. Some of the ways program administrators demonstrate their commitment to quality are:

- providing resources for staff to complete a related professional development certification or degree;
- supporting onsite mentoring;
- implementing employee/staff retention practices such as paying staff a higher wage compensatory to professional development; and
- education attainment and providing comprehensive employee benefits.

Quality Standards Associated with Administration & Leadership Domain

1. Program is guided by an ECE philosophy statement.
2. Program utilizes a continuous improvement process focused on supporting teachers to: create positive outcomes for children; create individualized and culturally responsive learning environments; engage and partner with families; and cultivate leaders.
3. Programs demonstrate supports for staff retention, wellness, and sustainable business practices.
4. Programs demonstrate time and tools to assure ECE and school age professionals and administration have access to ongoing professional development and coaching supports to advance their skills and knowledge.
5. Program leadership uses the Alaska ECL Core Knowledge and Competencies (and admin CKC) or approved equivalent to guide the development of annual professional development plans.

Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Qualifications & Professional Development Domain

ECE is a profession. While experience is valuable to any profession, formalized education and training plays a key role. The ECE sector works to shape the minds of children for Alaska's future. ECE training, professional development, and related supports are pivotal to improving ECE program quality

Quality Standards Associated with Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Qualifications & Professional Development Domain

6. ECE and school age professionals are actively engaged in ongoing professional development to advance SEED career ladder placement.
7. Staff continue to advance knowledge and understanding of best practices and developmentally appropriate practices of children in care: social emotional development; impacts of adversity; use of environment to support learning; inclusion and diversity practices; how to support children and families to be resilient; and how to use child observation & assessment and curriculum to guide interactions.
8. Staff are actively engaged in ongoing relationship based reflective coaching focused on positive adult-child interactions, fostering children's social emotional development, and supporting resiliency of all children specifically children who may experience adversity.

Learning Environment, Adult-Child Interactions & Child Outcomes Domain

Young children learn in the context of relationships. Adult and child relationships are critical to a child's readiness for school and success in life. One of the identified "few and the powerful" quality indicators is the use of whole child evidence-based curriculum and child assessment tools to fidelity. Learn & Grow introduces basic foundational training for teachers at Level 2. In Levels 3, 4 and 5, training and supports focus on the fidelity use of curriculum and child assessment to meet the individual needs of all children in a classroom and to monitor children's progress toward meeting outcomes and being prepared for kindergarten and later school.

Quality Standards Associated with the Learning Environment, Adult-Child Interactions & Child Outcomes Domain

9. Program uses a classroom assessment tool (environment and adult-child interaction) to advance the quality of the learning environment and relationships designed to support children's growth and development (i.e., ERS, CLASS, or YPQA).
10. Program provides families access to developmental and social emotional screening services designed to monitor child's progress toward meeting developmental milestones.
11. Program utilizes community resources such as special education, mental health consultation services, and/or Child Care Resource & Referral, to assure all children (including those with identified special needs or who have experienced adversity) have access to resources and supports to successfully participate with their typical peers in every-day learning opportunities.
12. Program uses, to fidelity, research based developmentally appropriate whole child curriculum(s) *(social emotional, math, language, music, art, movement and technology),* aligned to the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines or equivalent for licensed school-age programs, to inform weekly planning.
13. The ECE program uses, to fidelity, a research based whole child observation and assessment, aligned to the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines to plan developmentally appropriate instructional strategies and monitor child outcomes.
14. Program celebrates the culturally and linguistic diversity of all children and families enrolled in the program.

Family & Community Engagement Domain

Positive and nurturing relationships are critical between children and caregivers. ECE programs provide a place for families to connect with other families, access resources and community based services.

Learn & Grow has chosen to utilize Strengthening Families, a nationally recognized framework for increasing quality family engagement practices. Strengthening Families is supported through the Center for Study of Social Policy https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/. Strengthening Families is not a curriculum. It is a framework for ECE programs and communities to guide the individualized strategies and practices to increase "Protective Factors". Protective factors refer to traits of an individual that serve as strengths or assets than can reduce vulnerability to risk. The five (5) protective factors of Strengthening Families that have been shown to make positive outcomes more likely for young children and their families, and to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect include:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete Supports
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Quality Standards Associated with Family & Community Engagement Domain

15. Program values and intentionally plans for consistent communication and active family involvement in child's ECE and school age experiences.
16. Program provides access to supports and community resources to assist families in: meeting their child's needs; increasing their knowledge of child development; making social connection's; and helping successfully transition their child to school.

Learn & Grow Quality Activities

Learn & Grow Quality Activities scaffold across five levels of quality under each of the 16 quality standards. Quality activities are focused on both product and process activities designed to improve quality. Activities for each quality standards can be found in the Learn & Grow Program Guide and Learn & Grow website.

Section 13: Quick Look at Learn & Grow Levels 1 & 2

Learn & Grow is a block system composed of five (5) levels of quality. In order to receive recognition of a level, an ECE program must complete all required quality activities and minimum number of points associated with Level 3, 4, and 5. To advance to the next level, an ECE program must also complete all the requirements of any preceding level.

Phase II: In FY20 Learn & Grow will be available to all licensed ECE program types (Licensed Head Start/Early Head Start, Licensed State Pre-Elementary, and Licensed Child Care (homes, centers, and group homes). Additionally, Learn & Grow will explore participation of DEED approved programs (Head Start, Pre-elementary, and Preschool Special Education).

Phase III: Future implementation of Learn & Grow will include making Level 3, 4, and 5 available to all program types including licensed stand-alone school-age programs.

Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality

All Early Childhood Education Program Types (Licensed Child Care Homes, Group Homes, Centers, Early Head Start, and DEED approved Pre-elementary, Preschool Special Education, and Head Start programs)

Program Eligibility

- Child Care Centers, Group Homes, Homes, Head Start, Early Head Start, Pre-elementary programs with a State of Alaska/MOA Biennial License, a Licensed Tribal Child Care in good standing with oversight agency.

Administration & Leadership

- Complete and sign a program Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)

Staff Qualifications & Professional Development

- Leadership and lead teachers complete Learn & Grow Level 1 Training
- All teaching staff who provide direct care and supervision of children are active in the System for Early Education Development (SEED) Registry.

NOTE: Staff hired within 2 months of a program submitting their Level 1 verification are exempt from Level 1 SEED Registry and Level 1 training requirements.

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality

Quality Activities	Licensed Home	Licensed Group Home	Licensed Centers, Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-Elementary, & Tribal Child Care Center
Administration & Leadership			
*Administrator & Leadership Team members are SEED Level:	5	5	7
Alaska Early Childhood Administrator Credential (AK-ECAC)	NO	NO	Yes
Program has a written philosophy statement	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administrator signs the Learn & Grow letter of commitment	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administrator updates CQIP (or equivalent) within last 6 months of program verification submission	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individuals who completed Level 2 training complete Level 2 Survey	Yes	Yes	Yes

Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Qualifications & Professional Development			
Administrator, Leadership team, and Lead teachers (where applicable) complete Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality Trainings • *Pyramid Model Foundations* • *Introduction to ERS or CLASS (Center, Head Start, & Pre-elementary only)* • *Strengthening Families* • *Introduction to Alaska's Early Care and Learning Guidelines* • *Introduction to the Alaska Early Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies.*	Yes	Yes	Yes
NOTE: *Newly hired or new to position lead teachers or leadership team staff (excluding site administrator) hired within 6 months of program submitting Level 2 verification are exempt from completing Level 2 training requirements until the program's new renewal date.*			
Learning Environment, Adult-Child Interactions, and Child Outcomes			
Classroom Environment Assessment: • Complete the Environment Rating Scale (applicable to program type) or CLASS Self-Reflection and identify goals (on Classroom Action Plan or program CQIP) after conversation with **thread** PDS. • A program may choose to have an external ERS or CLASS assessment from an external inter-rater reliable assessor in 1/3 of total classrooms with a Classroom Action Plan.	FCCERS-3	FCCERS-3	ITERS-3, ECERS-3, SACERS-U OR CLASS

* *Programs with dedicated fiscal & human resource positions are exempt from obtaining Alaska Early Childhood Administrator Credential but must complete all 5 Level 2 Trainings.*

Section14: Learn & Grow Step By Step Guide

Eligible Programs

An early childhood program must meet their oversite agency requirements (State or MOA Child Care Licensing, Federal Head Start or Early Head Start, DEED, or AIAN/CCDF Tribal Child Care) to initially be eligible to participate in Learn & Grow.

a. Federal or State regulated Early Childhood Education program
    - At least 1 year operating as their program type
b. Child Care Programs Office (CCPO): Child Care Center, Home, Group Home, or Early Head Start (this may include Head Start or Pre-elementary programs who choose to also become licensed)
    - Open active status (legally exempt or licensed program)
c. DEED: Head Start and Pre-elementary programs
    - Have received pre-elementary approval AND are one of the following program types Title 1, Migrant Education, Pre-elementary, Head Start, and 619 Preschool Special Education programs
d. American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN)/Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Tribal Child Care not licensed with SOA or MOA child Care licensing or AIAN verification of status

Good Standing

For an ECE program to maintain their eligibility to participate in Learn & Grow, an ECE program must maintain "good standing" with their regulatory body.

Child Care Programs Office (CCPO): Child Care

Child care licensing staff will notify Learn & Grow of any changes in the licensing status of an ECE program.

a. **Good Standing:** Good standing is defined as a program holding a biennial license issued by the SOA Child Care Licensing or MOA Child Care Licensing and having no major violations at any time during a programs enrollment in Learn & Grow.
b. **Program Eligibility:** Licensed child care centers, group homes, and homes must have a biennial license issued by the SOA Child Care Licensing or MOA Child Care Licensing.
c. **Major Violations:** If a programs licensing status changes at any time, the child care licensing staff will notify Learn & Grow/**thread** of changes immediately. The following Major violations will automatically change a programs "good standing" eligibility status and place a program's Learn & Grow status on hold. Hold is defined as not working on Learn & Grow quality activities until otherwise notified by Governing body.
    - More children in care than allowed by law or out of ratio
    - Children not being supervised
    - Three or more or serious fire, health, or safety hazards
    - Adults present who have not received a valid criminal history check
    - Corporal punishment
e. If the major violation has been resolved, SOA or MOA Child Care Licensing will inform Learn & Grow via email the program's Learn & Grow participation can be reinstated.

Provisional Licensing status that will not impact a programs Learn & Grow eligibility: If one of the following actions occurs it will not impact the programs Learn & Grow status if they were previously enrolled in Learn & Grow.

- Ownership and/or person on the license changes
- Program moves location with the same program type (center, home, group home)

Department of Education and Early Development (DEED): Head Start, Pre-elementary, and Pre-School Special Education programs

a. **Good Standing:** A program has received a DEED approval certification and in good standing with Federal oversight agency where applicable (Office of Head Start).

b. **thread** will solicit via email a request to verify a programs eligibility status. A pre-elementary program must have DEED pre-elementary approval to be eligible to enroll in Learn & Grow. DEED will also verify the good-standing status of any Head Start or Pre-elementary program that is not also licensed by the State of Alaska or MOA child care licensing department.

Federal (AIAN/ CCDF Tribal Child Care not licensed with SOA or MOA child Care licensing or AIAN verified)

a. **Good Standing**: A program has a tribal or state issued child care biennial license.
b. **thread** will solicit via email a request to verify a programs eligibility status. An AIAN/CCDF Tribal Child Care will provide email confirmation that the program of inquiry meets their AIAN/CCDF Tribal Child Care good-standing eligibility criteria.

Non Eligible Programs

Early Childhood Education programs not eligible to enroll in Learn & Grow at this time

a. Home visiting programs (ie., Infant Learning/Part C; Parents as Teachers (PAT), EHS Home visiting, Nurse family partnership.)
b. Military Child Care Programs
c. Exempt faith-based programs
d. Non-licensed school age programs
e. Pre-elementary, other Early childhood education, or summer camp programs that operate less than 5 weeks a year
f. Nationally certified camp programs
g. Exempt family child care programs with 4 or less unrelated children (Tribal & State)

Learn & Grow Enrollment

Programs interested in enrolling in Learn & Grow should contact their local **thread** office and request to be enrolled in Learn & Grow. Programs can also email Learn & Grow at info@aklearnandgrow.org and request to be enrolled. Enrollment can take place before or after completion of Learn & Grow Level 1 Training.

Following a phone, in-person, or email request the ECE Program Administrator will receive an official "Welcome to Learn & Grow" email. The email specifies that a **thread** staff will contact them within 5 business days of receiving the email and will set up a time to meet and discuss details of Learn & Grow. The **thread** staff will review the following on the first visit with the program:

1. Administrator Credential content (Center only)
2. SEED Registry
3. Completion of CQIP
4. Level 2 Lead Teacher or Family Administrator Level 2 training series
5. Fiscal supports
6. Technical assistance

NOTE: Level 1 and 2 are typically worked on together. A program may only want to complete Level 1, however, Learn & Grow Level 1 Training covers the activities associated with Level 1 and 2.

Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality

Level 1: Quality Standards and Activities

Each level of quality addresses up to four quality domains (Administration & Leadership; Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Qualifications & Professional Development; Learning Environment, Adult-Child Interactions, and Child Outcomes; and Family & Community Engagement). Within each quality domain are standards. Standards are similar to long term goals. To achieve the standard/long term goal programs complete quality activities that progress across 5 levels of quality.

Quality Domain Area: Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Qualifications & Professional Development

Quality Standards	Quality Activities
ECE and school age professionals are actively engaged in ongoing professional development to advance SEED Career Ladder placement.	1) Leadership and all employed teaching staff who provide direct care and supervision of children are enrolled in Alaska SEED Registry with an active profile.
Staff continue to advance knowledge and understanding of best practices and developmentally appropriate practices of children in their program.	2) Leadership and lead teachers complete Learn & Grow Level 1 Training.

NOTE: Staff hired within 2 months of a program submitting Level 1 verification are exempt from completing Level 1 Training or being in the SEED Registry until the programs next yearly renewal designation.

Quality Domain Area: Administration & Leadership

Quality Standards	Quality Activities
Program utilizes a continuous quality improvement process focused on supporting teachers to: create positive outcomes for children; create individualized and culturally responsive learning environments; engage and partner with families; and cultivate leaders.	3) Complete and sign a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)

Level 1: How to complete Quality Activities

Quality Activity #1: SEED Registry

- Program administrators have employees go to https://www.threadalaska.org/seed/registry and complete the SEED Registry application, or contact SEED for assistance. Paper applications are also available to download from the website. Contact SEED Registry at info@seedalaska.org for additional assistance.
    - SEED Registry has thirty (30) business days from time of receiving a completed application to process an individual's information and assign them a SEED level.
        - Individuals will receive a SEED certificate indicating their level. This certificate is also stored on the online portal.

- To maintain an active enrollment in the SEED Registry an individual is required to update their SEED Registry on an annual basis. SEED will send an email reminder with the individual's renewal date.
- Pending status is not considered active enrollment. Applications may be pending for the following reasons:
  - All the necessary documentation for SEED to assign an individual a level on the SEED Career Ladder has not been submitted.
  - An individual's application is in the "cue" of applications to be processed within the 30 business days.

Quality Activity # 2: Learn & Grow Level 1 Training

- The Learn & Grow Level 1 Training is a FREE 1 hr SEED approved training that provides an overview of what a QRIS is, Learn & Grow's framework, Level 1 and 2 quality activities, supports and resources available, and how to enroll in the SEED Registry.
- The Learn & Grow Level 1 Training is required for all eligible program types (Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, Home, Early Head Starts, Head Start, Pre-elementary, or DEED approved Head Start, Pre-elementary, or Preschool Special Education programs).
- The Learn & Grow Level 1 Training is available via webinar, face to face, or statewide conferences. To find the next available training and times go to http://www.**thread**alaska.org and click on the training tab and register. A program can work with their **thread** Professional Development Specialist (PDS) to arrange a time to complete the Learn & Grow Level 1 Training.

Quality Activity #3: Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)

- A **thread** PDS will set up a time to meet and conduct a CQIP interview. The purpose of the interview is to learn more about a typical day of an Administrator so to identify concrete goals and activities the **thread** PDS and Administrator can work on together. The CQIP also helps the PDS and the Program Administrator to identify goals and think about what supports and resources would help the program achieve the identified goals. Finally, the CQIP identifies what staff have completed what Level 1 &2 Trainings to assist the program in developing a plan for remaining staff who need training.
- The interview will consist of 3 questions
  - Tell me what a typical day looks like for you?
  - What would an ideal day look like?
  - What are some barriers or challenges to making this ideal day occur?

Level 1: Technical Assistance (TA)

ECE programs will receive technical assistance (TA) from **thread** staff to help achieve Level 1 Quality Activities. The TA can be conducted via phone, but when at all possible a face to face visit is preferred. TA will include:

- Completion of a self-reflection document to help identify a programs goals and readiness.
- Completion of Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)
- Support the programs to enroll staff in the SEED Registry.

Level 1: Verification Documentation

Learn & Grow will use the SEED database to verify a programs completion of Level 1 Training and SEED Registry profiles. Additionally, the **thread** Professional Development Specialist will collect a

copy of the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan or equivalent (i.e., DEED strategic plan, Head Start annual plan, etc.) from the program prior to submitting Level 1 Verification. The thread staff conducting the Learn & Grow verification process will use the **thread** database (which serves at the SEED and Learn & Grow databases as well) to verify submission of a CQIP or equivalent. The only Level 1 Verification documentation needed is the 1 page Level 1 Verification Checklist.

Level 1: Verification

The ECE program has 120 business days from the first contact with a **thread** Professional Development Associate (PDA), following official enrollment date, to complete all Level 1 Activities and become verified.

After completing Level 1 Quality Activities, the ECE program will complete the Level 1 Verification Checklist and submit it via one of the following methods for the Level 1 Verification process.

- Email directly to info@aklearnandgrow.org
- Mailed to 3350 Commercial Drive Suite 203 Anchorage, Alaska 99501 Attn: Learn & Grow
- Faxed: 1 (907) 265-3191 or (877) 563-1959
- Delivered in person to a local **thread** office OR provide to programs assigned PDS who will deliver to Learn & Grow for verification

The **thread** staff will provide the Level 1 Verification Checklist to the program when they are ready.

A paper copy of the Level 1 Verification Checklist can also be submitted in person or mail to the local **thread** office who will take measures to assure it is sent to the Learn & Grow Verifier or an ECE program can mail directly to 3350 Commercial Drive Suite 203 Anchorage, Alaska 99501 Attn: Learn & Grow Verifier.

The Level 1 Verification Checklist includes:

- First and last names of all employees
- Last 5 digits of Social Security Number
- Employee start date
- Position/title of each employee
- SEED Level and Expiration Date
- Professional Development Goals (met, not met, or in progress)
- Current biennial State or MOA child care license, DEED or Tribal child care approval status
- Completion of Learn & Grow Level 1 Training (An ECE program does not need to submit a copy, but rather the Learn & Grow Verifier will confirm completion of Learn & Grow Level 1 Training in the **thread** data system (NDS)).

By submitting the Level 1 Verification Checklist, ECE programs are assuring the most accurate record of current employees and their individual information.

ECE Program Administrator is responsible for assuring all staff are in the SEED Registry. Individual ECE providers go to https://www.threadalaska.org/seed/financial-support to access professional development funding opportunities.

Within ten (10) business days of receipt of a Level 1 Verification Checklist, the ECE program will receive notification of Level 1 Recognition level or notification of missing information that may be preventing the program from receiving Level 1 Recognition.

Level 1: Marketing Materials

A Learn & Grow Marketing Tool Kit will be provided to the ECE program with their Level 1 Recognition certificate. The Learn & Grow Marketing Tool Kit may include:

- Family Letter Template (describing Learn & Grow and an ECE program's participation in the system)
- Learn & Grow window decal signifying the Learn & Grow Recognition level the program has received
- Learn & Grow stickers
- Learn & Grow talking points that an ECE program could include in a newsletter, press release or other marketing materials the program may be utilizing.

Level 1: Financial Incentives

There are no fiscal incentives available at Level 1.

Level 1: Renewal

An ECE program's Learn & Grow renewal occurs one year from the month of the last recognition level received. ECE programs will receive email notification of their Level renewal **90 business days** prior to the month of their renewal. ECE programs should consult their **thread** staff person to assist with any SEED Registry related activities to support the annual Level 1 Renewal process. Programs will receive an email notification, followed by a written letter via mail, and finally by phone call in an attempt to contact the program. Failure to contact the **thread** staff to assist with renewal will result in programs removable from Learn & Grow.

A program may re-enroll no less than 90 calendar days from Learn & Grow removal date.

Level 1: Withdrawal

If a program does not complete Level 1 Quality Activities and submit their Level 1 Verification paperwork within 120 business days of their enrollment date, the program will receive an email notification will explain their 120 business day requirement to complete Level 1 Quality Activities has passed, and unless they submit all necessary paperwork within the next 30 calendar days they will be withdrawn from Learn & Grow. The program will be eligible to re-enroll no less than 3 months from the withdrawn date. A program may also be withdrawn from Learn & Grow if the **thread** PDS has made three attempts at minimum1 each of the following: phone call, email, and letter, within 1 month time but the program has not responded.

Post Expiration date: A program that does not renew their Level 1 Recognition status by the expiration date but has been in contact with their PDS, will be provided a 30 calendar day extension post expiration date to submit all necessary renewal paperwork. Failure to submit the necessary paperwork by the end of the 30 calendar day extension will result in the program being withdrawn from Learn & Grow.

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality

(**NOTE:** A program must maintain Level 1 Recognition status in addition to the following Level 2 Quality Activities)

Level 2: Enrollment

If an ECE program chooses to enroll in Level 2 the assigned **thread** PDS will review the content of the Learn & Grow Letter of Commitment. Signing and dating the Learn & Grow Letter of Commitment serves as the official enrollment date into Level 2.

The Letter of Commitment outlines the ECE Program Administrator and EC educator responsibilities, potential time an ECE program may need to stay actively involved in the Continuous Quality Improvement Process, **thread's** time commitment, resources and supports that will be made available to the ECE program to assist in meeting the Learn & Grow Level 2 Quality Activities.

If an ECE program does not choose to work on Level 2, they are responsible for maintaining an active Level 1 Recognition status to continue their participation in Learn & Grow.

Level 2: Quality Standards and Activities

Quality Domain Area: Administration & Leadership

Quality Standards	Quality Activities
Program is guided by an ECE philosophy statement.	1) Developed a written philosophy statement.
Staff continue to advance knowledge and understanding of best practices and developmentally appropriate practices of children in their program	2) Obtain the Alaska Early Childhood Administrator Credential (AK-ECAC) or content equivalent for eligible programs.
Program utilizes a continuous improvement process focused on supporting Teachers to: create positive outcomes for children; create individualized and culturally responsive learning environments; engage and partner with families; and cultivate leaders.	3) Update a continuous a quality improvement plan (CQIP) within last 6 months of program verification submission.

Quality Domain Area: Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Qualifications & Professional Development

Quality Standards	Quality Activities
Early childhood education and school age professionals are actively engaged in ongoing professional development to advance SEED career ladder placement.	4) Center Administrator and Leadership team are a SEED Level 7. Home and Group Home Administrators are a SEED Level 5.
Staff continue to advance knowledge and understanding of best practices and developmentally appropriate practices of children in their program.	5) Lead Teachers and Leadership Team (if applicable: education coordinators, and/or other educational support staff/ director positions and administrator) complete Level 2 trainings: Alaska Early Care and Learning

	Core Knowledge and Competencies, Introduction to the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines, Introduction to the Pyramid Model, Strengthening Families, and Introduction to ERS OR CLASS. 6) Level 2 Survey

NOTE: Newly hired or new to position Lead Teachers or Leadership Team members (excluding Program Administrator) hired within 6 months of program submitting Level 2 Verification are exempt from completing Level 2 Training requirements. At Level 2 Annual Renewal an ECE program is responsible for assuring new Lead Teachers have completed the Level 2 Trainings.

Quality Domain Area: Learning Environment, Adult-Child Interactions and Child Outcomes

Quality Standards	Quality Activities
Program uses a classroom assessment (environment and adult-child interaction) to advance the quality of the learning environment and relationships designed to support children's growth and development (ERS or CLass).	7) Complete an Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale-3 (ITERS-3), Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-3 (ECERS-3), and/or School Age Environment Rating Scale- Updated (SACERS-U). Self-Reflection tools for each classroom and goals identified on each Classroom's Action Plan after conversation with **thread** PDS. **OR** Environment Rating Scale (ERS) OR CLass assessment from an external inter-rater reliable assessor in 1/3 of total classrooms with a Classroom Action Plan.

Level 2: How to Complete Quality Activities

Quality Activity #1: Program Philosophy

The purpose of the program philosophy is to help the program communicate to families, teachers, and their communities what their beliefs and values are associated with their program. The program philosophy should address how they believe children develop and learn, what role the teacher plays in their child's development, and what role families play in their child's development. The PDS has guidance materials to assist a program with the development of a philosophy statement if they don't already have one.

Quality Activity #2: Alaska Early Childhood Administrator Credential (AK-ECAC) or content (Center, Head Start, Early Head Start, or Pre-elementary programs ONLY)

- The goal of the AK-ECAC is to provide Administrators with the skills and knowledge to support the ECE program in staying actively engaged in continuous quality improvement.
- There are multiple pathways for an ECE Program Administrator to complete the AK-ECAC. The purpose of multiple pathways is to acknowledge the previous course work, training, experience, or education that would satisfy one or all of the content areas.
- AK-ECAC Content areas include:
    1. Pyramid Model Foundations
    2. Strengthening Families
    3. Introduction to Alaska Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies
    4. Introduction to the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines

5. Introduction to the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) or Classroom Assessment Scoring Scale (CLass)
6. Fiscal Management
7. Human Resources/Personnel Development

- Go to https://www.**thread**alaska.org/seed/ak-ecac for additional details.
- Any program that has a designated Fiscal Management and Human Resource staff is exempt from obtaining the AK-ECAC. The Leadership Team is not exempt from completing the five Learn & Grow Level 2 trainings (Pyramid Model Foundations, Strengthening Families, Introduction to Alaska Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies, Introduction to the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines, and Introduction to the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) or Classroom Assessment Scoring Scale (CLass)
- All trainings must be approved by the SEED Training Approval System.
  - See the list of SEED Approved Trainings located at info@aklearnandgrow.org
  - The current approved list is not an exhaustive list. If the Program Administrator has completed a training or course not on the approved list, the program will consult with SEED to learn about eligibility for the approval process.

Quality Activity #3: Updated Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)
The CQIP is to be monitored annually and at least reviewed within 6 months of a program submitting verification paperwork. Monitoring includes documenting progress toward goals, revisions and/or new goals added if necessary. There are several program evaluation/ and or needs assessment tool and questioning provided by the thread PDS to assist with the identification of any new program goals.

Quality Activity #4: Administrator SEED Level
A Center, Head Start, Early Head Start, or Pre-elementary Program Administrator must be a SEED Level 7. Home and Group Home Administrators must be a SEED Level 5.

Quality Activity #5: Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality Trainings

- Program Administrators, Leadership Team members and Lead Teachers complete the Level 2: Moving into Higher Quality Training Series. There are five trainings:
  - Pyramid Model Foundations
    - There are multiple pathways to complete this training (some free, some at cost, and most can be reimbursed through SEED).
    - Pyramid Model Foundations training is nationally recognized training designed to support the social emotional development of young children birth through age 8 in ECE settings.
  - Strengthening Families
    - This training is offered in several ways and most are free or have SEED funding available.
    - Strengthening Families is a nationally recognized framework and training designed to help programs help children and families increase the five protective factors:
      - Parental Resilience
      - Social Connections
      - Concrete Supports
      - Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
      - Social and Emotional Competence of Children
  - Introduction to Environment Rating Scale (ERS) or Classroom Assessment Scoring Scale (CLass)
    - Environment Rating Scale

        - ERS is a nationally recognized assessment tool used in many states QRIS systems. The ERS tool evaluates what children experience in a typical day and includes the assessment of the learning environment, materials and interactions. Introduction to the Classroom Assessment Scale (CLass)
    - CLass Adult-Child Interaction tool
        - The CLass is another nationally recognized assessment tool used in many state's QRIS systems. The CLass tool evaluates what children experience in a typical day and includes the assessment of the learning environment, materials and interactions. CLass is not available for Home or Group Home programs or Infant/Toddler classrooms in a center.
- Alaska's Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies
    - The AK- ECLCKC can assist EC educators in understanding the many skills needed to provide quality programs for children. This session will describe the AK-ECLCKC, how they are organized, and how they connect to advancing the professional development of EC educators.
    - If Lead Teachers have already completed one or all of the content areas in the Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality training, some or all of the training requirements may already be met.
- Alaska Early Learning Guidelines
    - The Alaska Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) reflects the expectations for the knowledge and skills of young children from birth to kindergarten entry. This training will review the domains and how to use this valuable resource for planning curriculum and communicating with families about their child's development.

ECE programs are encouraged to consult with their assigned **thread** Professional Development Specialist (PDS) regarding access to trainings and to identify trainings that may have already been completed.

There are multiple pathways to complete all trainings except the Introduction to the Alaska Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies and the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines. See the approved Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality Training document with available university, face to face, online, credit, CEU and non-credit/training hour methods. To see a complete list of Learn & Grow Level 2 trainings go to https://www.threadalaska.org/learn-and-grow/for-educators/for-my-program/forms.

Quality Activity #6: Classroom Self-Reflection and Classroom Action Plan (CAP)
Programs can choose to use one of two tools: ERS or CLass.

- Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Self-Reflection
    - An ECE program that chooses to use the ERS must have each ECE classroom complete an ERS Self-Reflection and a Classroom Action Plan reflecting activities to improve quality of learning environment. Program may also request, but not required, an outside assessment from an inter-rater reliable assessor and must also complete a Classroom Action Plan following the assessment.
- CLassroom Assessment Scoring System (CLass)Self-Reflection
    - Programs who choose to use the CLass) must also complete a Classroom Action Plan based on results of the most recent CLass assessment (no more than 6 months old from Learn & Grow verification submission) that was conducted by a reliable assessor for 1/3 of total pre-school classrooms. CLass is not available for licensed home or group home programs.

- A program may request an official external ERS or CLass assessment, but it is not required.
    - The Assessment Request Form must be submitted at minimum of thirty (30) business days prior to the available assessment times provided.
    - The program will be contacted by the **thread** Quality Services Director, who manages the assessment process, within 10 business days from when request was received to set up a **two-week window** for the assessment.
        - The assessments will be scheduled on a first-come-first-serve basis.
        - The assessments are unannounced within the **two-week window** of time. The **two-week window** should include dates where the program does not have field trips or special activities schedule so the assessor can view a typical day at a program. The program may choose one day during this period as an unavailable date.
    - The program will receive a summary of the assessment results within 15 business day of the last classroom assessment conducted. The **thread** PDS will discuss results of the assessment and help develop the Classroom Action Plans.
    - Assessment Cancellation Policy:
        - Once a program agrees upon the assigned two-week assessment window, they must be available and prepared for an assessor's visit every day during the window unless they have selected one unavailable date. A program cannot cancel their assessment window unless they notify the Quality Services Director at least two weeks before the first day of their assessment window. Programs that cancel with less than a two-week notice will be subject to pay travel cancellation cost before another assessment window will be scheduled.

Upon completion of Level 2 trainings each participant will have completed a Self-Reflection. Each classroom must use this Self-Reflection alongside other classroom needs assessment tools provided by the thread PDS toc complete a Classroom Action Plan. Similar to the CQIP, the CAP should be reviewed annually and no longer than 6 months prior to a program submitting their Level 2 Verification paperwork.

A program may choose to have an external evaluation using the ERS or CLass instead, but are still required to complete the Classroom Action Plan (CAP) to guide the Relationships Based Professional Development Specialist[1] work with the classroom teacher.

[1] Relationship Based Professional Development (RBPD) is a term several states use to categorize a growing group of cross disciplinary professionals working to support early childhood professionals, programs, and children. Several titles fall under the category of RBPD including: consultant, mentor, coach, reflective supervisor, Infant or Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, behavior consultant, technical assistance provider, etc. RBPD Professionals require specific skills, knowledge, and training above and beyond early childhood or early childhood special education degrees, or content training. See appendix for visual representation of RBPD related work.

Activity #7: Level 2 Survey

A Level 2 Survey is to be completed as part of the Level 2 Verification process by all Lead Teachers and Leadership Team prior to submitting the Level 2 Verification paperwork. At Level 2 Verification Renewal only newly hired Lead Teachers or new Leadership Team members from the programs initial Level 2 Verification date will need to complete the Level 2 Survey. A **thread** PDS will provide the program with a link to the survey.

Level 2: Technical Assistance (TA)/Relationship Based Professional Development (RBPD)

- Each ECE program may receive TA/RBPD from a **thread** PDS. When possible this will take place face to face.
- TA/RBPD is customized to each ECE program to meet the individual needs of the ECE program to achieve Level 2 Learn & Grow Quality Activity Requirements.
    - There are two types of Level 2 TA/RBPD:
        - Administrative: focused on development of the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan, program management, fiscal, personnel, writing/revision program philosophy statement, intentional PD goal setting, and meeting the training needs of their program.
        - Classroom: Individual classroom TA/RBPD is available after a teacher has completed the Introduction to Environment Rating Scale or CLass Training. The **thread** PDS will work with the classroom teachers to create a Classroom Action Plan to guide their work together.

Level 2: Verification Documentation

Programs may have copies of annual program improvement or classroom plans where goals for the year are listed. These can be submitted in place of the program CQIP (or Annual Plan or Strategic Plan) and the Classroom Action Plans. However there are a few minimum content pieces that will need to be included:

Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)/Annual Plan/Strategic Plan

- Program annual goals
- Strategies including resources for achieving the goals
- Some type of process/indicator of how goal is being met
    - Must be reviewed at least 6 month prior to Level 2 Verification submission. Any updates should be reflected and the Administrator should sign and date.

Classroom Action Plans

- Identification of classroom goals
- Strategies including resources for achieving the goals
- Some type of process/ indicator of how goal is being met
- A Classroom Action Plan should be informed by the CLass or ERS Self-Reflection of official assessment (conducted no more than 6 months from date of Classroom Action Plan).

Education Level of Administrator and Staff

- There is no alternative to identifying an Administrators or Lead Teachers education level other than through an up to date SEED Registry profile.

CLass or ERS assessments

- CLass or ERS assessments conducted within 6 months by an inter-rater reliable assessor, of a program submitting for Level 2 Verification can be used for Level 2 Verification. They must have a Classroom Action Plan or equivalent to accompany them.

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality Training

- Only the trainings listed in the Level 2 Training Description document https://www.**thread**alaska.org/learn-and-grow/for-educators/for-my-program/forms are eligible for Level 2 Verification. Documentation of these trainings can be uploaded into the individuals SEED registry profile where Learn & Grow will view for verification. If trainings are conducted by **thread** training certificates will be uploaded by **thread**. A program does not have to submit copies of completed training certificates when they submit their Level 2 Verification Checklist.

Alaska Early Childhood Administrator Credential

- If an Administrator has submitted the 1 page application for the AK-ECAC and received the credential certificate there is no need to submit any documentation at Level 2 Verification. Learn & Grow will use the SEED Registry for verification.
- Programs who have dedicated positions to fiscal and human resources do not need to obtain the credential but do need to complete the five Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality Trainings.

Level 2: Verification

The ECE program determines when they are ready to be verified at Level 2.

The ECE program will complete the Level 2 Verification Checklist and submit to the Learn & Grow Statewide Systems Coordinator at **thread** that will process the Level 2 Verification. Level 2 Verification Checklist includes:

- First and last names of each employees
- Last 5 of SSN
- Employment start date
- Position/title of each employee
- SEED Level and Expiration dates
- PD goals (Met, Not Met or Progress)
- Copy of program's Philosophy Statement
- Alaska Early Childhood Administrator Credential
- Level 2: Moving into Higher Quality Training for Leadership Team and Lead Teacher
- ERS or CLass Self-Reflections and Classroom Action Plans for each classroom
- Completed Level 2 Survey from each Lead Teacher and Leadership Team member

Within ten (10) business days of receipt of a Level 2 Verification Checklist, the ECE program will receive notification of Level 2 Recognition or notification of missing information needed to complete the verification process.

Level 2: Marketing Materials

Level 2 Verification includes: a marketing tool kit with Level 2 marketing language on a jump drive, Learn & Grow sunglasses for each child, and Learn & Grow key chains for each teacher in the program.

Level 2: Financial Award

Learn & Grow Level 2 programs receive quality award in the amount of $1000 for programs serving 30 or more children or $500 for a program serving less than 30 children.

Level 2: Annual Renewal

An ECE program's Learn & Grow renewal occurs annually. ECE programs will receive notification of their Level 2 Renewal 90 days prior to the date of their renewal. To renew a program will:

- Submit current action plans for each classroom and any new ERS Self-Reflection or CLass assessments of new Lead Teachers. *(Must be reviewed and/or revised within 6 months of submitting for verification-signed and dated)*
- Make sure all SEED Registry profiles are active
- Any new Lead Teachers or Leadership Team members have completed the Level 2 Trainings (if applicable)
- Updated program CQIP(within last 6 months)
- Make sure the administrator meets the Alaska Early Childhood Administrator Credential requirements. (Center programs only)
- Level 2 Survey for any new Lead Teachers or Leadership Team members since initial Level 2 Verification

ECE programs will submit a Level 2 Renewal Verification checklist. Renewing ECE programs will annually continue to receive the Level 2 monetary quality award of $1000 for a program with 30 or more children or $500 for a program serving less than 30 children, and updated Learn & Grow marketing materials as long as they continue to meet Level 2 Quality Activities.

NOTE: Only new Leadership Team members or Lead Teachers need to complete the Level 2 Trainings and SEED Registry requirements and only if they are new staff or new to position for 6 or more months from submitting Level 2 Renewal Verification checklist.

Level 2: Withdrawal

A program may be withdrawn from Learn & Grow for one of the following reasons.

- No follow up or call back: A program may also be withdrawn from Learn & Grow if the **thread** PDS has made three attempts at minimum1 each of the following: phone call, email, and letter, within 1 month time but the program has not responded. (Attempts to contact will be documented in **thread's** database).

- If an EC program does respond to a **thread** PDS and the indicates interest in continuing with Learn & Grow the program will have 30 calendar days to submit all necessary paperwork. Failure to submit the necessary paperwork by the 30 calendar day deadline will result in the program being withdrawn from Learn & Grow.
- Expired Renewal Verification Date: A program that does not renewal their Level by the expiration date but has been in contact with their **thread** PDS, will be provided a 30 calendar day extension date to submit all necessary renewal paperwork. Failure to submit the necessary paperwork by end of the 30 calendar day extension will result in the program being withdrawn from Learn & Grow.

Phase III

Phase III: Future implementation of Learn & Grow will include making Level 3, 4, and 5 available to all program types including licensed stand-alone school-age programs.

Appendix

Definitions

Classroom Action Plan: A plan that helps the classroom teachers and **thread** PDS identify goals and strategies to accomplish goals. A CAP provides timelines, roles and responsibilities, and monitors progress of goals. CAP should be reviewed at least every 6 months but quarterly is recommended in order to stay actively engaged in a continuous quality improvement process.

CAP's are specific to each classroom. Family and Group Home programs can include classroom based goals on their CQIP and are not required to complete a CAP.

Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP): Continuous Quality Improvement Plans are designed to help a program identify its programmatic goals. A CQIP is not specific to classroom goals but may have administrative goals that align and support goals identified in CAP. Some programs have programs plans that are called Annual Plans or Strategic Plans. If a program has one of these plans they are not required to complete the Learn & Grow CQIP, however must follow the same monitoring process of reviewing at least once every 6 months if not more frequently.

Lead Teacher: An early childhood educator designated as the individual primarily responsible for the learning environment of the classroom.

- Some ECE programs may have more than one Lead Teacher in a classroom or they do not distinguish between a Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher. To support the barriers associated with staff turnover, Learn & Grow only requires a specific number of teachers at each level of quality to complete the Level 2 Quality Activities. ECE programs are welcome to have all teachers complete Level 2 trainings but at minimum one Lead Teacher per classroom must be identified and complete Level 2 Trainings.

Leadership Team: Each program can define for themselves who is part of their Leadership Team. Something for programs to consider when creating/identifying a Leadership Team is: who has authority to make decisions about the day to day operations, funding, curriculum, development of policies/procedures, and/or staffing of a program. These individuals most likely could be part of a leadership team. At minimum the Leadership Team should include the administrator of the program who is indicated on the child care license.

Pre-Elementary: DEED certified program serving children 3-5. This includes Title I, migrant education, and pre-school special education (619) classrooms.

Program: A program is defined as a single site. For instance a child care program may have several sites, but each site is considered a separate program with a separate child care license. A Head Start grantee may have multiple sites, but similar to child care each location is a separate program. Finally, the same logic applies to school districts. Some districts have several schools. Each school is considered a program regardless of the number of pre-elementary programs at the school.

Relationship Based Professional Development: