

## SUPPORTING EQUITABLE CCEE WORKFORCE OUTCOMES: DEFINING AND ALIGNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

### Discussion Questions

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1. Read the full definition of workforce development on your handout. What about our definition matches your working definition of the term? What doesn't match? What is missing?
2. Read the full definition of quality improvement. What questions do you have about the distinctions between QI initiatives, CQI intervention models, and CQI performance monitoring?
3. Review the terms in the Venn diagram. What elements might be missing from Recruitment and Retention? Workforce Knowledge and Skills? Early Learning Program Quality?
4. Review the contextual factors that influence QI and WD initiatives. Are there any contextual factors that are not captured by the ones listed here?
5. Where and how should equity be included in the diagram?
6. How can defining and aligning help actors from diverse perspectives (i.e., research, policy, and practice) meet collective goals?

### Designing across Objectives: Use Cases

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One goal of better defining workforce development and quality improvement is to make the connections between certain activities, objectives, and outcomes more transparent, and hopefully, lead to more impactful designs.

Consider the following use cases. Take a moment to consider how these initiatives include workforce development and/or quality improvement strategies.

#### *Use Case 1: Initiative to Improve Teacher Well-Being and Social Emotional Instruction*

A group of researchers have designed an intervention with four promising strategies to enhance teacher well-being and social-emotional instruction in order to both improve retention rates and the quality of care provided to children. The intervention combines:

1. Teacher training in mindfulness and adult social-emotional learning (SEL);
2. Teacher coaching in developmentally SEL appropriate teaching practices;
3. Director coaching in strategies to cultivate a positive workplace environment; and
4. Incentives tied to completion of intervention requirements and demonstrations of skills.

### *Use Case 2: Initiative to Improve STEM Instruction*

Interventionists seek to address concerning assessment scores in STEM areas at kindergarten entry. They focus their intervention activities on:

1. Group trainings in STEM content areas;
2. Coaching in evidence-based STEM instructional strategies; and
3. Provision of a high quality supplemental STEM curriculum

### *Use Case 3: Initiative to Strengthen Workforce Recognition*

Administrators of a state workforce registry hope to strengthen career pathways for teachers by introducing a new competency-based recognition pathway that is parallel to the traditional degreed pathway. In this new system they integrate:

1. Online professional learning courses that support teachers in understanding and demonstrating the state's core competencies.
2. Higher level career pathway rankings within the workforce registry for workforce members who earn competency-based micro-credentials, as an alternative to higher education degrees. Both the micro-credentials and the higher career pathway ranking are portable qualifications for the workforce member.

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CCEEPRC Research Collaborative: Quality Improvement and Workforce Development

### Defining Early Childhood Workforce Development and Quality Improvement

**Early Childhood Workforce Development** refers to activities that support the knowledge, skills, competencies, and career advancement opportunities of diverse members of the early childhood workforce (e.g., caregivers, teachers, and administrators in public and private settings). These activities aim to strengthen the workforce broadly by providing different supports for individual workforce members. They often build members' specific skills and knowledge by providing support through training, job-embedded learning, certification, and/or degree attainment, ideally in connection with a clear career pathway. Strong workforce development programs articulate specific goals and expected outcomes—including how activities result in quality improvement—and should lead to positive impacts for individual workforce members (career development), early learning programs (stronger marketability and workforce retention), families (better care and education services), and society (strong workforce pipeline, greater access to quality, better child outcomes). Workforce development programs are often supported by content resources, trained personnel, data management technology, and monitoring and evaluation tools.

**Quality Improvement** is a term often used interchangeably to refer to one or more of the following concepts: (1) QI initiatives, (2) CQI-based intervention models, and (3) CQI-based performance monitoring.

For our purposes, QI initiatives broadly refers to activities that aim to improve the quality of care and learning experiences provided to children and families. QI initiatives often include workforce development (e.g., improving leadership skills, teacher behaviors), attention to learning environments (e.g., stimulating materials and experiences), installation of specific programs and routines (e.g., family engagement), and collaborations among service providers (e.g., Head Start-child care partnerships). A specific QI initiative can be strengthened by embedding continuous quality improvement (CQI) methodology to increase the focus on and transparency of incremental goals and progress for participants. These CQI-based intervention models typically involve engaging participants in cycles of setting goals, taking action, and reflection on progress (e.g., plan-do-study-act cycles). Lastly, CQI-based performance monitoring frameworks leverage CQI methodology to aid implementation teams in improving QI delivery over time, regardless of whether the intervention itself uses a CQI model.

Workforce development and quality improvement initiatives often overlap, with specific activities contributing to both objectives. The following image provides examples of this relationship. In contrast, CQI-based intervention models and CQI-based performance monitoring can be embedded in any workforce development or quality improvement initiative as methods to improve the quality of the initiative's design and delivery. Finally, the viability and success of any workforce development and quality improvement initiative are likely influenced by economic, societal, and policy factors specific to the state and/or local context, and or the maturity of the evidence base and implementation capability and capacity. Effective designs for initiatives account for these drivers.

Figure A. Priorities and Strategies among Workforce Development and Quality Improvement Initiatives

