

Addressing Equity and Diversity in Oregon's Quality Rating and Improvement System

Intro

The Early Learning Division is focused on three goals: 1) children ready for kindergarten 2) stable and attached families, and 3) coordinated and aligned systems. Each of these goals requires strategic support of strong early learning and development programs. The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is designed to help strengthen and support licensed child care facilities.

For QRIS to be successful it has to value and support racially and ethnically diverse child care providers and serve racially and ethnically diverse children. If it does not support and serve diverse communities, disparities will be worsened.

The purpose of this document is to ensure equity is addressed in all aspects of QRIS. The plan outlined in this document builds upon previous work and addresses questions and concerns that have been raised during the initial stages of field testing. This document lays out a plan for engaging underserved communities, specifically racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities, in both adjustments to the QRIS and in plans to recognize and highlight positive early learning experiences wherever they take place.

We acknowledge that it is our responsibility as a Division to ensure that equity is at the fore in every decision we make. Making this statement of responsibility a reality will require significant self-reflection as individuals and as a Division. We know that had we had more racial and ethnic diversity at our leadership tables and spent more time meaningfully engaging racially and ethnically diverse communities we may have avoided some of the equity concerns this plan seeks to address. As we do the equity work we need to do as a Division, - the type of activities this plan highlights should and will be integrated into our day-to-day business.

Why is quality child care important?

A large body of evidence clearly documents the significance of the brain development that happens during the first 2,000 days of a child's life. During that time a child's brain is developing the foundation for all future social, emotional and cognitive learning and development. Although most children do not have large vocabularies before they are a year old, language development is at its peak between 8 and 10 months. Before children even enter kindergarten, their brains will have created the foundation for their future success in school and beyond.

This understanding of brain development makes an important case for high quality experiences for young children. While many children spend their earliest years at home with family members, many more are in informal or formal child care settings.

Oregon's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) was developed as one tool to support licensed child care providers in creating high quality learning environments for the children they serve. The QRIS also creates an opportunity for parents to know more about whether the child care they choose has been structured to meet the important learning and development needs of their children. The QRIS provides an easy-to-understand framework for parents to identify programs that meet learning and development standards.

Positive early learning experiences can happen in a broad range of settings, including a private home with a family member, , small groups with a child care provider and public preschools. The QRIS is not meant to in any way limit or diminish the value of the many ways children can engage in positive learning and development experiences. It is designed to recognize and increase the quality of the early learning and development experiences that happen in child care and other formal settings. It also provides a tool for licensed child care providers to be more aware of and strive to reach high standards, with support, in order to meet those learning and development needs.

Giving families more access to environments that are focused on children's learning and development is one way to ensure that more children are ready for kindergarten, they are reading by third grade and given a strong foundation for future success.

Current status of QRIS

Oregon's QRIS was developed with funding in Oregon's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. The QRIS was initially field tested in 2013 in eight carefully selected counties based upon diversity of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and rural-urban settings of its residents. In March, 2014, Oregon expanded the field test of the QRIS statewide. Early Learning and Development Programs across the state are now encouraged and incentivized to participate and give their feedback to the field test. Oregon is working hard to ensure that before the next iteration of the system is developed ELDP's and early learning professionals have sufficient opportunity to provide input and feedback. For this reason the decision was made to extend the field test timeline through 2016.

Oregon's QRIS provides a flexible process for participation. Any interested ELDP begins by attending and Increasing Quality Training to learn about the process. From there, ELDPs who are interested in participating submit an application to apply for Oregon's first QRIS designation, Commitment to Quality. Programs then are able to choose how they proceed through the QRIS. They have access to financial supports and specialized training and technical assistance to help them improve quality in the areas they have identified as wanting to work on. Any time a program is ready to become star rated, they compile and submit a portfolio demonstrating how they meet the tiered quality standards. Programs can choose to submit evidence documenting quality at the 3-Star level or submit additional evidence at the 4 and 5 star level to be considered for a higher quality rating. After the portfolio is reviewed, ELDPs receive feedback on their portfolio and are eligible to resubmit for a higher rating as soon as they are ready. Rated programs are also eligible for additional financial incentives. During the field test, participating programs give their feedback and input formally and informally. Data is collected throughout the process and all participating programs are specifically asked to complete surveys about parts of the process.

Collecting data on the race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status of all children in child care has been a challenge for the Division. Most child care is done in small independent businesses and is not publically funded like K-12 schools. Programs are not required to collect data on families. Those challenges acknowledged, getting a clearer understanding of which children are being served in which settings is important and necessary work for the Division.

The children and families that we do have more demographic information on are those that receive child care subsidy. The Employment Related Day Care program provides financial support for about 20,000 families to pay for child care for about 35,000 children each year.

Children whose families currently receive child care subsidy:

- **58%** of children on subsidy are in licensed care, of which **39%** are children of color

- **15%** of children on subsidy are in QRIS participating programs (Commitment to Quality-5 Star), of which **42%** are children of color
- **32%** of children on subsidy are in licensed family child care, of which **39%** are children of color
- **42%** of children on subsidy are in license-exempt or family and relative care, of which **38%** are children of color
 - *These numbers are based on September 30, 2014 unduplicated count of subsidy data*

Total number of children in:	Licensed-exempt	Licensed care	Commitment to Quality	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star
American Indian/Alaskan Native	156	130	110	5	4	0
Asian	93	76	27	0	2	1
Black or African American	723	643	191	17	6	10
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish	1465	1613	460	43	7	9
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	156	130	110	5	4	0
White	3994	4079	1289	83	37	14
Unknown	1643	1806	406	35	7	3

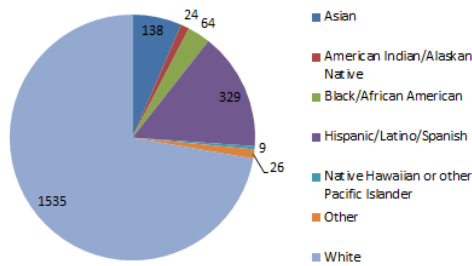
In addition to subsidy data, we also have some demographic data on licensed child care providers serving children

- **37%** of the child care workforce (working directly with children) are people of color.
- **17%** of the child care workforce in Commitment to Quality through 5 Star programs are people of color.
 - *These numbers are based on the 59% who chose to indicate race and ethnicity*
 - *Categories where chosen in 2011 based on existing categories*
 - *2010 Census Data shows the state of Oregon is comprised of 21.5% people of color*

	Total # in licensed care	Total # in C2Q-5 Star
American Indian/Alaskan Native	169	38
Asian	490	109
Black or African American	424	116
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish	2083	334
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	118	24
Other	277	1102
White	9645	2490
Not Given	8336	790

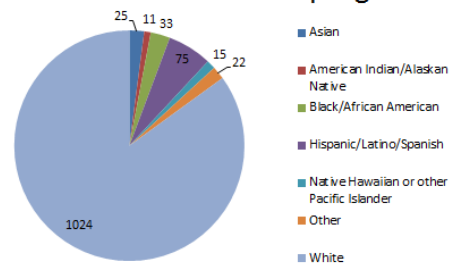
- **18%** of the facility leaders/managers in licensed child care programs are people of color, with **15%** in Commitment to Quality through 5 Star Programs.

Leaders in Family Child Care



18% of the leaders are a people of color

Leaders in Center-based programs



18% of the leaders are a people of color

Equity Questions and Concerns

The equity questions and concerns that have been raised about QRIS include:

- 1) Although community engagement was conducted during the creation of QRIS, some communities of color were not explicitly invited to be deeply engaged in the creation of QRIS.
- 2) There is a concern about the quality standards and whether they inherently favor dominant culture providers.
- 3) There is a concern about whether there is an equity lens applied within the standards. Are providers that have a focus on equity being recognized for that commitment?
- 4) There are concerns about which child care providers are currently accessing the QRIS. Are resources going to those who need them most?
- 5) There are questions about the extent to which the state should be focusing on licensed providers. Does the focus on the QRIS (and as a result, licensed child care providers) unintentionally exacerbate inequities?
- 6) There is concern that the QRIS could lead providers to increase prices and price-out families they previously served.

Addressing these concerns and demonstrating a commitment to diverse quality early learning experiences will require a combination of better communications about the purpose and design of QRIS, meaningful engagement with racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities, and adjustments to QRIS based on feedback.

The plan below is designed to not only address the concerns that have been raised, but to change the way we do the Early Learning Division and its partners do business. The Early Learning Council Equity Subcommittee's recommendations will also inform this plan going forward.

Equity Lens Belief Statement: We believe that the students who have previously been described as “at risk,” “underperforming,” “under-represented,” or minority actually represent Oregon’s best opportunity to improve overall educational outcomes. We have many counties in rural and urban communities that already have populations of color that make up the majority. Our ability to meet the needs of this increasingly diverse population is a critical strategy for us to successfully reach our 40/40/20 goals.

Concern 1: Lack of meaningful engagement of racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities.

Strategy to Address: Engage racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities in development of community engagement plan. Listen to and engage with underserved communities around QRIS design and implementation specifically and positive early learning environments generally.

Previous Work	Next Steps	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>1) During the initial development of the QRIS standards and process, focus groups were held across the state including focus groups with identified Spanish speaking providers, rural providers, urban providers, and Eastern European (including Russian speaking) providers. Additional providers participated in non-culturally specific focus groups.</p> <p>2) The processes of the QRIS have undergone iterative development based on the Process Evaluation Study primarily focused on feedback from participating ELD programs. Most significant were changes made in preparation for expanding to statewide access to the field test.</p> <p>3) QRIS implementation timelines have</p>	<p>1) Get feedback from community leaders and Early Learning Council Equity Subcommittee on an engagement plan to listen to and respond to concerns and questions.</p> <p>2) Conduct focus groups and best-practice-informed surveys with parents, child care providers and advocates. Questions will be related to practices and values around early childhood. What do parents want for their children at this age? What’s currently working for them and what isn’t? What are the hopes and dreams for their children? What currently informs parenting decisions? What currently informs programs’ decisions?</p> <p>Partner with culturally-specific community based organizations, early learning hubs, and child care resource and referral agencies to engage with Spanish speaking, Eastern European, African American, Native American and rural communities with additional communities identified through ongoing community</p>	<p>Partnerships are established to help engage with diverse communities.</p> <p>Feedback is gathered from parents, child care providers and advocates about practices and values around early childhood from the above diverse communities.</p> <p>Race/ethnicity Data is</p>	<p>Meaningful engagement of diverse populations in QRIS participation, leadership.</p> <p>Race/Ethnicity data demonstrates diverse participation in QRIS among underserved populations.</p> <p>QRIS serves diverse populations in a culturally relevant way.</p> <p>QRIS assists children from diverse populations to be successful in</p>

Previous Work	Next Steps	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>been revised to incorporate targeted feedback and partnership and to allow for increased participation as part of the validation study (to determine whether the star-ratings are tied to differentiated outcomes for children)</p>	<p>engagement work</p> <p>Seek an independent, third-party to conduct engagement.</p> <p>3) Identify relevant race, ethnicity and cultural characteristics of populations participating in QRIS (TRI QRIS Process Evaluation).</p> <p>4) Disaggregate current process evaluation data and program feedback by relevant race, ethnicity and cultural characteristics to understand barriers, needs, benefits, cultural relevancy of the QRIS specifically (TRI QRIS Process Evaluation).</p> <p>5) Conduct focus groups with underserved populations participating in the QRIS to understand barriers, needs, benefits, cultural relevancy of the QRIS specifically.</p> <p>6) Conduct focus groups with those not participating in QRIS to understand barriers, needs, benefits, cultural relevancy of the QRIS specifically.</p> <p>7) Circle back with focus groups and community leaders to share what was heard and invite feedback on next steps.</p> <p>8) Add individuals from underserved communities to the QRIS leadership - including providers, community based organizations and researchers with expertise in increasing quality in racially/ethnically diverse programs and in working with culturally specific populations of parents to access early learning services.</p>	<p>collected on participants in QRIS</p> <p>Feedback and input is gathered from diverse populations regarding the QRIS, specifically, from QRIS participants and non-QRIS participants.</p> <p>Information on what was heard is provided to stakeholders and stakeholders provide input on next steps.</p> <p>Above feedback is incorporated into changes into QRIS process or content.</p> <p>Individuals representing diverse populations are included in QRIS leadership.</p>	<p>Kindergarten.</p>

Equity Lens Belief Statement: We believe the rich history and culture of learners is a source of pride and an asset to embrace and celebrate.

Concern 2: Cultural bias of chosen standards.

Strategy to Address: Using feedback and input from parents, providers and advocates, map the standards to an inclusive vision of quality and equity. Identify gaps and needs in the next round of standard revisions.

Previous Work	Immediate Next Steps	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>The QRIS remains in field test with plans for continuous improvement, including adjustments to the standards.</p> <p>The Oregon QRIS team consulted with national experts on the development of the QRIS including on the topic of culturally and linguistic relevant practices</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Define a process and team for mapping the standards to an inclusive vision of quality and equity. 2) Update a literature review on culturally responsive practice in child care to inform the equity mapping of the standards. 3) Complete the mapping of standards. 4) Compile a listing of gaps and identified needs to be used with the results of the Validations Studies 1 and 2 and the QRIS Process Evaluation Study to revise QRIS Standards. <p>2) Continue work to highlight a broad range of exemplars of “quality”- based on QRIS Standards and demonstrate through video, photos, and interviews what the range and diversity of standards can look like in practice and meet the criteria of quality (TRI QRIS Team).</p>	<p>A map is created related to QRIS standards and equity/culturally relevant practices.</p> <p>A list of gaps is created as input to revising QRIS standards.</p> <p>Through various mediums, examples are available to show what range and diversity of standards to show to the public and providers.</p>	<p>QRIS standards are culturally relevant.</p>

Equity Lens Belief Statement: We believe the rich history and culture of learners is a source of pride and an asset to embrace and celebrate.

Concern 3: Equity prioritized within standards.

Strategy of Address: Ensure that serving diverse populations is seen as an asset and a value in defining quality.

Previous Work	Next Steps	Outputs	Outcomes
The Oregon QRIS team consulted with national experts on the development of the QRIS including on the topic of culturally and linguistic relevant practices.	Once engagement work has been conducted determine whether additional equity standards should be created.	A list of gaps is created as input to revising QRIS standards.	QRIS standards are culturally relevant.

Equity Lens Belief Statement: We believe that resource allocation demonstrates our priorities and our values and that we demonstrate our priorities and our commitment to rural communities, communities of color, English language learners, and out of school youth in the ways we allocate resources and make educational investments.

Concern 4: Child care providers that serve racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse children may not be accessing QRIS

Strategies to Address:

- 1) Gather current data and identify equity gaps in service.
- 2) Use engagement to inform a shared leadership model and create diverse advocates for quality child care initiatives, including the QRIS (once valid concerns have been addressed or there is a plan for addressing them)
Identify and articulate how subsidy and the QRIS will be coordinated and ensure that the equity lens is used to determine design and implementation of policy.

Previous Work	Immediate Next Steps	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>1) As programs engage in QRIS, participation is tracked and feedback on key aspects of the process and impact of the process is collected and analyzed. A Quarterly Process Evaluation Report is produced.</p> <p>2) Ongoing modifications have been made to the QRIS process based on results of the Process Evaluation Study.</p> <p>3) Early Learning Division Language Team was created to vet translated materials.</p> <p>4) Early Learning Hubs received funds to build a supply of quality child care in targeted communities (Focused Child Care Networks)</p> <p>5) Federal Technical Assistance is being provided to ELD and DHS to address access to high quality care and subsidy including training of DHS subsidy and eligibility staff regarding quality care.</p>	<p>1) Elevate programs and policies that serve children and families in all forms of care settings.</p> <p>2) Once engagement and standards equity mapping has taken place, evaluate current and potential strategies for reaching underserved communities.</p> <p>3) Shift communications around QRIS to focus less on the number of providers involved, and focus more on the fact that the project is still in a field test and highlight learnings and challenges as well as successes.</p> <p>4) Communicate about QRIS in a manner that provides valuable insight and tools for license-exempt providers</p> <p>5) Consider hiring an outside firm to conduct an evaluation of the extent to which racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse child care providers and families are accessing the QRIS</p> <p>6) Engage ELC Equity subcommittee and key partners in identifying how to collect data on equity and diversity in a responsible manner</p> <p>7) Based on feedback and in partnership, evaluate effectiveness of and make adjustments to the Focused Child Care Networks grants.</p> <p>8) Based on feedback and in partnership, <i>adjust contracting practices</i>, requiring more concrete action from Child Care Resource and Referral related to equity and culturally specific providers, including evaluating the racial/ethnic diversity of staff.</p> <p>9) Based on feedback and in partnership, adjust contracting practices to <i>diversify quality improvement contractors</i>, expanding beyond the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, working with community</p>	<p>Communications are produced that elevate field test, learnings, challenges, and success.</p> <p>Exploration completed regarding hiring an outside firm to conduct specific equity access study.</p> <p>Communications are produced for license exempt providers.</p> <p>Updated strategies are created for reaching underserved populations, including Focused Network Grants.</p> <p>Contracting practices require specific equity and culturally specific provider work.</p> <p>Culturally relevant Community based organizations are engaged to work with culturally diverse providers with QRIS.</p> <p>A specific addendum is</p>	<p>Culturally diverse providers, leaders, and families are represented and supported by QRIS.</p> <p>Communications, policies, and contracts demonstrate a diverse participation and elevation of equity.</p>

	<p>based organizations that have cultural expertise and trust in communities of color.</p> <p>10) Based on feedback, consider increasing submission incentives for non-English speaking QRIS portfolio submission</p> <p>11) Add an addendum to the Quarterly QRIS Process Evaluation Report focused specifically on equity and convene QRIS implementation team for discussion of implications</p> <p>12) Focus intentionally on increasing the diversity of participation in the Child Care and Education Coordinating Council (CCECC)</p>	<p>added to QRIS Quarterly report to focus on equity.</p> <p>The participation of diverse stakeholders is increased at CCECC.</p> <p>Submission incentives are provided for diverse languages portfolios</p>	
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Working Document

Equity Lens Belief Statement: We believe that ending disparities and gaps in achievement begin in the delivery of quality Early Learner programs and appropriate parent engagement and support. This is not simply an expansion of services -- it is a recognition that we need to provide services in a way that best meets the needs of our most diverse segment of the population, 0-5 year olds and their families.

Concern 5: Focus on licensed providers

Strategies to Address: 1) In state communications, put the QRIS in the larger context of supporting quality learning environments for all children (including unlicensed and friend, family and neighbor care).

2) Implement a public campaign that demonstrates a valuing of culturally relevant visions of quality and highlights the many forms of quality care (licensed center, in-home provider, grandma, neighbor).

Previous Work	Immediate Next Steps	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Oregon has a Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) state plan, which is focused on ensuring that low-income families have access to child care. The CCDF rules are shifting more and more to a focus on quality. Oregon as a state will have multiple strategies for better addressing the child care needs of low-income families and the availability and accessibility of quality care (regardless of licensing status)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Elevate programs and policies that serve children and families in all forms of care settings. 2) Communicate about QRIS in a manner that provides valuable insight and tools for license exempt providers 3) Bring together a quality learning environments campaign planning team with membership from culturally-specific community based organizations, rural communities and the Early Learning Division among others, 	<p>A planning team is created including culturally specific community based organizations, rural communities, and others to address the elevation of license exempt programs</p>	<p>Children and families have access to a variety of early learning settings that are high quality and culturally relevant, and assist children in being successful in Kindergarten.</p>

Concern 6: Increased quality leads to pricing out families.

Strategy to Address: Formally evaluate the impact of quality rating on provider practice, rates and demographics of children served.

Previous Work	Next Steps	Outputs	Outcomes
1) As programs engage in QRIS, participation is tracked and feedback on key aspects of the process and impact of the process is collected and analyzed including quality improvements programs make and how the QRIS has shifted practices.	1) Hire an independent contractor to investigate how star-rated programs have shifted their practices (specifically rates) and who they serve. 2) Share results of investigation with Early Learning Division Equity Subcommittee and other partners 3) Use results of analyzing shift in programs practice with other QRIS Process Evaluation Study and Validation Studies results to adjust QRIS Standards and processes.	A planning team is created including culturally specific community based organizations, rural communities, and others to address the elevation of license exempt programs	Children and families have access to a variety of early learning settings that are high quality and culturally relevant, and assist children in being successful in Kindergarten.

As an additional accountability measure, staff will document progress and updates on a quarterly basis and provide this documentation to a broad group of stakeholders (to be identified). The stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide feedback as well as respond to specific questions on which the staff is seeking guidance.

Timeline

Listening and Engaging	Next Steps
<p>Now through March 31st, 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Get feedback from community leaders and Early Learning Council Equity Subcommittee on an engagement plan to listen to and respond to concerns and questions. b. Conduct focus groups and best-practice-informed surveys with parents, child care providers and advocates. Questions will be related to practices and values around early childhood. What do parents want for their children at this age? What’s currently working for them and what isn’t? What are the hopes and dreams for their children? What currently informs parenting and provider decisions? Partner with culturally-specific community based organizations, early learning hubs, and child care resource and referral agencies to engage with Spanish speaking, Eastern European, African American, Native American and rural communities with additional communities identified through ongoing community engagement work. Seek an independent, third-party to conduct engagement. c. Conduct focus groups with underserved populations participating in the QRIS and additional focus groups with those not participating to understand barriers, needs, benefits, cultural relevancy of QRIS specifically. d. Add individuals from underserved populations to the QRIS leadership - including providers, community based organizations and researchers with expertise in increasing quality in racially/ethnically diverse programs and in working with culturally specific populations of parents to access early learning services. e. Define a process and team for mapping the standards to an inclusive vision of quality and equity. f. Perform a literature review on culturally responsive practice in child care to inform the equity mapping of the standards. g. Elevate programs and policies that serve children and families in all forms of care settings h. Shift communications around QRIS to focus less on the number of providers involved, and focus more on the fact that the project is still in a field test and highlight learnings and challenges as well as successes (ongoing)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Consider hiring an outside firm to conduct an evaluation of who is being served through the QRIS j. Add an addendum to the recently produced QRIS process evaluation focused specifically on equity and convene QRIS implementation team for discussion of implications k. Focus intentionally on increasing the diversity of participation in the Child Care Coordinating Council
April 2015- May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Circle back with focus groups and community leaders to share what was heard and invite feedback on next steps. b. Engage ELC Equity subcommittee and key partners in identifying how to collect data on equity and diversity in a responsible manner c. Highlight a broad range of “quality”- break down the standards and demonstrate through video, photos, and interviews what the standards can look like in practice. (ongoing) d. Communicate about QRIS in a manner that provides valuable insight and tools for non-licensed providers (ongoing) e. Bring together a quality learning environments campaign planning team with membership from culturally-specific community based organizations, rural communities and the Early Learning Division among others f. Hire an outside organization to investigate how star-rated programs have shifted their practices (specifically rates) and who they serve
Adjusting and Mapping	Next Steps
May 2015-June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Once engagement and standards equity mapping has taken place, evaluate current and potential strategies for reaching underserved communities. b. Based on feedback and in partnership, <i>adjust contracting practices</i>, requiring more concrete action from Child Care Resource and Referral related to equity and culturally specific providers. c. Share results of investigation of how star-rated programs have shifted their practices (specifically rates) and who they serve with Early Learning Division Equity Subcommittee and other partners

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. Based on feedback and in partnership, evaluate effectiveness of and make adjustments to the Focused Child Care Networks grants. e. Based on feedback and in partnership, adjust contracting practices to <i>diversify quality improvement contractors</i>, expanding beyond the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, working with community based organizations that have cultural expertise and trust in communities of color. f. Based on feedback, consider increasing submission incentives for non-English speaking QRIS portfolio submission
July 2015-August 2015	If major revisions to QRIS standards or implementation are deemed necessary, begin engaging communities around revisions by August 31 st , 2015.
January 2016	Roll out revisions to QRIS standards