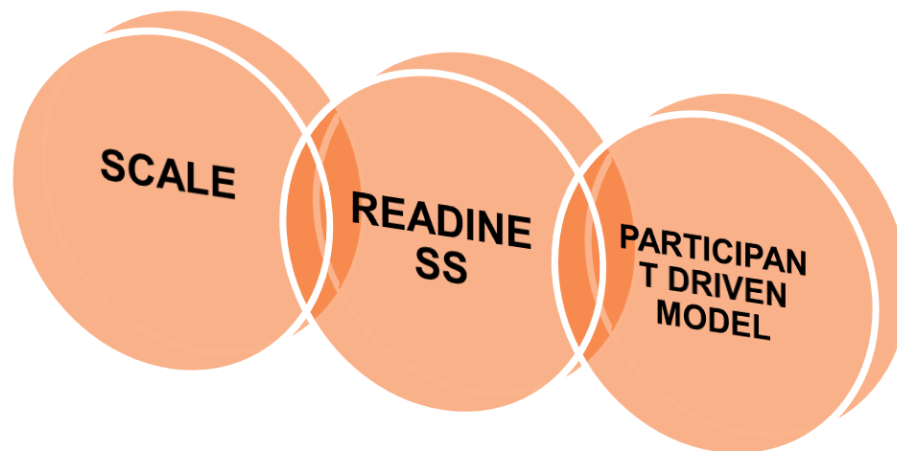


As the national trend in QIRS moves toward continuous quality improvement (CQI), FTF embarked on a focused effort to determine a long-term strategic direction of Quality First, including identification of refinements to the model to ensure continuous quality improvement of Quality First, increase integration and coordination of Quality First with the early childhood system, and establish financial sustainability that enables movement toward scale. This effort included the convening of the Quality First Advisory Subcommittee (QFASC).

### QUALITY FIRST ADVISORY SUB COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the QFASC were based on three themes:



**Scale** – the redesign of Quality First will address the *finite resources* available and refine the model so that licensed and regulated programs are able to participate in Quality First if they choose to do so.

**Readiness** – in an effort to promote program readiness, the *sequencing of activities* for participants shifts to front loading professional development efforts and training to the beginning of the process prior to moving to a formal assessment.

**Participant Driven Model** – the redesign will focus on *finding efficiencies* by leveraging resources of state partners to support programs in engaging in the quality improvement process.

To ensure a collective approach in the re-design of Quality First, First Things First has convened state partners including, The Arizona Head Start Association, the Department of Economic Security Child Care Administration, the Arizona Department of Education, and the Department of Health Services Office of Child Care Licensing. The collaboration has resulted in the following:

- agreed upon quality standards for the state (Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education Birth through Kindergarten <https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=5879561caadebe0c98a80509>), that the standards will be measured through a consistent process, and that supports can be offered in alignment across all state partners with these recommendations;
- a developmental framework considering the recommendations of the Quality First Advisory Sub-Committee was developed (see Quality First Redesign Framework below).

First Things First utilized Dr. John Love, First Things First National Advisory Panel Chair, to support the redesign of the components including information and orientation, technical assistance, quality program review (self-assessment) and formal assessment.

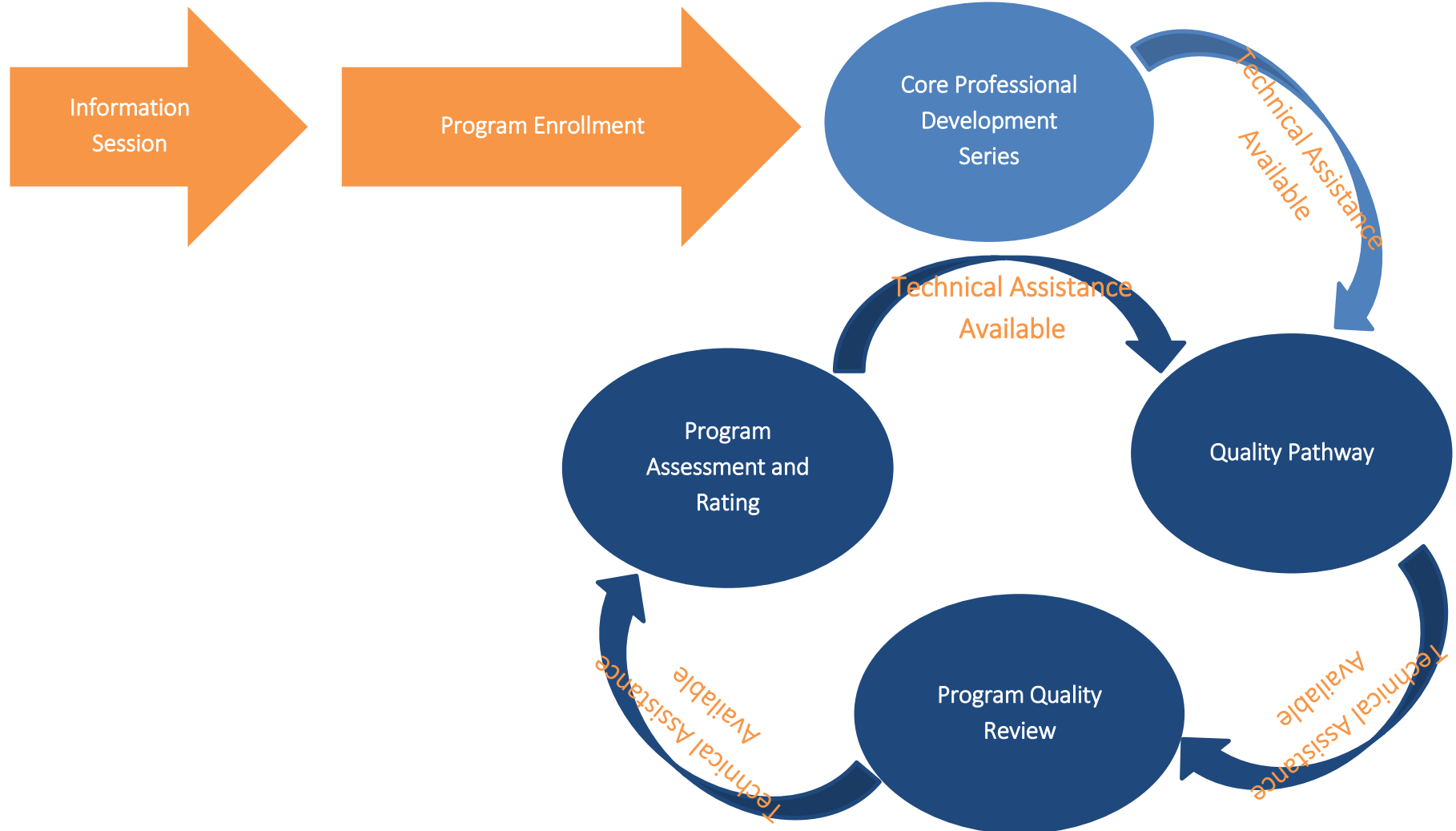
# QUALITY FIRST REDESIGN FRAMEWORK

## PROGRAM READINESS

Information about Quality First is provided to promote readiness to participate in a continuous quality improvement process.

## PARTICIPANT DRIVEN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

A developmental framework that would shift the philosophy of the model from quality intervention to quality development, driven by participants themselves.



## PROGRAM READINESS

Program readiness activities provide the foundation for engaging in the quality improvement process. The components of program readiness include the information session and enrollment process.

### *INFORMATION SESSION*

The intended outcome of the information session is to support a provider interested in Quality First participation with an understanding of the program, process, and expectations. The information session will communicate the expectation of a participant driven approach to continuous quality improvement. Informational sessions about Quality First are available on-line for any provider whether or not they choose to participate in QF.

### *ENROLLMENT*

Before a program can apply and enroll in Quality First, the owner (as applicable) and director are required to participate in the information session. Programs will submit basic information in the online Quality First application.

## PARTICIPANT DRIVEN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

The redesign of Quality First has an intentional focus on an individualized, participant driven approach rather than a one size fits all. There is a wide range of capacity among early care and education programs with some able to move through a continuous quality improvement process on their own and others who require significant support. The Core Professional Development Series, Quality Pathway, and Program Quality Review offer participating programs the opportunity to engage in a comprehensive quality improvement process.

### *CORE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES*

Upon completion of the information session and enrollment into Quality First, program participants begin the continuous quality improvement process participating in:

- State Standards Training
  - Introduction to the Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten;
  - Introduction to the Infant Toddler Developmental Guidelines<sup>1</sup>; and
  - Introduction to the Arizona Early Learning Standards<sup>2</sup>.
- Regulatory Orientation/Director Workshop, as applicable to the participating program's regulating organization (DHS BCCL, DES CCA, Military, or Tribal)
- Introduction to the AZ Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network

### *QUALITY PATHWAY*

The Quality Pathway is based on the Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten which is a set of recommended practices for early care and education programs to use as they strive for excellence in the care and education of young children throughout Arizona.

The Quality Pathway is defined by a Facilitation Guide that supports a participating program through their review of the 8 core areas of the Program Guidelines. The Facilitation Guide is designed to be used independently by participating programs.

### *PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEW*

Participating programs will evaluate their own quality practice using the best practices identified in the 8 areas of the Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten. This will offer a baseline review of the participating program's alignment with the practices that contribute to program quality prior to moving forward with a formal assessment.

<sup>1</sup> <https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=54efdb1e1130c00eb465d5bc>

<sup>2</sup> <https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=591e2ea43217e122b492b21f>

**SUPPORTS FOR PARTICIPATING PROGRAMS**


Access to supports during the continuous quality improvement process is provided to remove barriers that keep participating programs from implementing best practices. The types of supports that are offered in the Quality First redesign include access to technical assistance and program incentives.

*TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE*

Technical Assistance is one of the primary components in a quality improvement system to facilitate learning and provide supports for participating programs based on individual need. Technical assistance is available from the start of the Core Professional Development Series throughout a participating program’s enrollment in Quality First.

While it is possible that a participating program would be able to be successful in moving through the Quality Pathway on their own, it is recognized that there are programs that will need support, and the technical assistance component is envisioned as a continuum of increasingly intensive supports available to participating programs.

The technical assistance approach developed for the Quality First redesign is structured to be individualized in order to meet the needs of each participating program in engagement in a quality improvement process and Quality First activities. The type and levels of technical assistance that participating programs can access are increasingly more intensive and are to be developed and carried out for all participating programs across all regions included in the field test.

Lowest Intensity  Highest Intensity	<b>Navigation:</b> support solely through phone and e-mail.
	<b>Communities of Practice:</b> support through a group approach in the community provided in-person or through the use of technology.
	<b>Targeted Technical Assistance:</b> individualized support in a specific focus area provided on-site and initiated by the participating program.
	<b>Intensive Technical Assistance:</b> individualized support provided on-site and initiated by a Technical Assistance Provider for programs who are not engaging in a continuous quality improvement process or Quality First activities.

*PROGRAM INCENTIVES*

Incentives will include both incentives to support quality improvement as well as incentives to reward quality achievement.

## QUALITY FIRST REDESIGN FIELD TEST

A process evaluation is being conducted to understand the implementation of the Quality First Redesign (referred to as the Quality First Redesign Field Test). The field test is anticipated to begin in November 2017 and last until June 2020. The sample size of this study will include approximately 80 early care and education programs and include a variety of program characteristics, including:

- Program Type
  - Centers and Homes
  - Head Start
  - School District
  - Private (Corporate, Non-profit, Faith Based, etc.);
- Program Status
  - Not participating in Quality First (the majority of Field Test participants will be comprised of this group)
    - Quality First Wait list
    - Not on the Quality First wait list
  - Participating in Quality First (a small number of Field Test participants will be comprised of this group)  
NOTE: programs that are currently participating in Quality First who agree to participate in the field test will create a vacant slot for the current model that will be filled. Current programs that participate in the Field Test will move entirely to the new system, but will continue to participate in QF Scholarships if they are currently participating.
- Enrollment Characteristics
  - Children receiving DES Subsidy
  - Children in the child welfare system
  - Children in poverty
- Geographic Locations
  - Rural
  - Urban
  - Tribal
- Program Size (based on the capacity of children 0 – 5, not in kindergarten)
  - Small ( 0 – 50 children)
  - Medium (51 – 150 children)
  - Large (150+ children)

An RFP to identify a research vendor to conduct the Field Test and Phase II of the Quality First Validation Study is currently open and will close on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Updates about findings from the Field Test will be communicated throughout the study. Findings from the field test will inform the modification of Quality First for future implementation, including a comprehensive financing model. It is anticipated that the refined Quality First model will be implemented starting SFY 2023.