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Developing a Staffed Family Child Care Network: A Technical Assistance Manual



NATIONAL CENTER ON
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Introduction

There is growing recognition of the importance of family child care¹ (FCC) as a significant driver of quality in early care and education (ECE), yet FCC providers are traditionally overlooked as key stakeholders in the field (Cortes & Hallam, 2016). As a result there are missed opportunities to leverage their participation in statewide quality, professional development, and child care supply building efforts. Moreover, through targeted relationship-based quality improvement and professional development efforts, FCC providers may be less likely to feel isolated from resources and other professionals in the ECE field.

State systems often struggle to reach out to these caregivers and offer support. In an effort to address this challenge, the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (ECQA) has developed five new documents addressing promising strategies for States, Territories, and Tribes to improve the quality of care and engage and sustain provider participation in regulatory systems and quality improvement initiatives. A staffed FCC network is a community-initiative that has paid staff with expertise in working with FCC providers who deliver a menu of ongoing support services and resources to affiliated FCC providers (Bromer, Van Haitisma, Daley, & Modigliani, 2009). These networks are a promising practice and strategy to support FCC providers in delivering positive and nurturing early care and learning environments. Additional information on FCC and the critical nature of supports for and quality in FCC may be found in *Staffed Family Child Care Networks: A Research-Informed Strategy for Supporting High-Quality Family Child Care* at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/staffed-family-child-care-networks-research-informed-strategy-supporting-high-quality>.

This manual, the second in the series of five ECQA documents, is written for leaders and stakeholders at the state, regional, and local levels who are planning to offer supports to the FCC provider community through staffed FCC networks. It provides key considerations and questions necessary to effectively implement networks.

How Do I Use This Manual?

The first section of this manual explores the rationale for adopting networks as a promising approach to improve FCC quality and the role of FCC in serving a range of diverse populations. The second section explores the critical components of a staffed FCC network. The third section outlines the four stages of successful network implementation—exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation. Each section is sequential but may be revisited at any time during network implementation. The appendices include a variety of resources to assist in implementing the strategies laid out in the manual.

A resource for estimating the cost of operating a FCC network, *Staffed Family Child Care Network Cost Estimation Tool User's Guide*, is available at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/staffed-family-child-care-network-cost-estimation-tool-users-guide>. The CET Excel file can be obtained by emailing the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance at QualityAssuranceCenter@ecetta.info or calling 1-877-296-2250.

Staffed FCC Networks: Supporting Quality, Responsive Care

The 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act revised the objectives of the Child Care and Development (CCDF) program. The law now emphasizes improvement in the overall quality of child care services and programs and supports an increase in the number and percentage of children from families with low incomes in high-quality child care. To meet higher quality standards, FCC providers need support and resources. Research suggests that coaching, mentoring, and other relational approaches to training and professional development efforts show promise as strategies that improve quality in FCC settings (Bromer,

¹ The term “family child care” refers to all care offered in a provider’s home. The term can also be used to refer to licensed care specifically. “Family, friend, and neighbor care” is used to refer to unlicensed care arrangements.

Van Haitsma, Daley, & Modigliani, 2009; Porter & Reiman, 2015). This support is particularly important, as FCC providers often have limited access to professional development opportunities and resources on quality child care or quality improvement opportunities.

How Are Staffed FCC Networks Uniquely Positioned to Impact FCC Quality?

A central issue facing FCC providers is the feeling of isolation. The nature of the caregiver’s role entails working long hours with young children and limited opportunities to leave the home. It is challenging and demanding work, without the presence of colleagues for backup support or to share experiences. In addition, FCC providers require services and supports that are specific to meeting the needs of young children in a home-based environment. Staffed FCC networks not only support quality of care, but do so in a way that builds on the strengths of a home-based setting.

Networks enable FCC providers to access a range of services and supports with a targeted focus on FCC and on the areas of greatest need for each program. The support provided typically includes some combination of visits to FCC homes, training workshops, coaching and consultation, access to support via a dedicated phone line (“warm” lines), along with business and administrative supports for providers. For example, providers who are just starting out may need assistance with licensing and start-up equipment, while providers who are already licensed may seek help in specific areas of quality improvement. Networks also offer FCC providers an opportunity for ongoing and meaningful professional relationships with network staff, as well as a place to connect with other providers.

Providers are well-positioned to adapt to and meet specific care needs of families, including families seeking care that aligns with their culture and values. For example, many young children of families who have immigrated to the United States are regularly in the care of family, friends, and neighbors. Such informal care settings are typically “license-exempt,” meaning the providers are legally exempt from regulation due to the small number of children in care. Networks serve as a resource for obtaining child development information, linking children to health and screening services, and reducing isolation of caregivers.

Furthermore, networks may support FCC providers to serve as competent and culturally sensitive caregivers of children who are learning in their home language while simultaneously learning in English. Research shows supporting bilingualism in young children can have wide-ranging benefits, from cognitive and social health early in life to long-term positive impacts.

Theories of change link outcomes and activities to explain how and why the desired change is expected to happen.

Logic models graphically illustrate program components, and creating one helps stakeholders clearly identify outcomes, inputs, and activities.

Key Elements of an Effective Staffed FCC Network

Promising network practices show that effective networks contain four essential elements: an articulated theory of change model to guide network services, network service delivery strategies, staff-provider relationships, and staff training and support.

Theory of Change and Logic Models

Theory of change is an essential driver in effectively designing, operating, and evaluating networks. [Logic models](#) show a process of anticipated change by identifying desired and/or expected long-term and intermediate network outcomes, the network’s target population, and strategies that will be used to reach these goals. Logic models are

particularly important for FCC networks to use in establishing their goals, which are uniquely linked to their intended target population.

Before embarking on development of a network, stakeholders should clearly define and articulate its scope and focus. Ideally, a logic model is developed during network design as part of strategic planning. However, network partners can create a logic model at any time to help bring clarity to the work, create consensus or better understanding about the network, or to help focus an evaluation. A clearly articulated logic model will help identify the scope and purview of a network and assist in conceptualizing networks' change efforts. A logic model will help stakeholders:

- ◆ articulate their understanding of the current community or State needs related to FCC, and determine the changes they hope to bring about through network implementation;
- ◆ identify who needs to be involved in the network and for whom the network is developed;
- ◆ identify activities planned to contribute toward this change;
- ◆ determine the resources needed to put into the network; and
- ◆ clarify assumptions they are making, and external factors that could influence results.

Like a road map, a logic model shows the intended route and the steps to be taken to reach a specific end point. A detailed model indicates how each activity will lead to desired changes. A logic model also expresses the thinking behind a network's plan, and helps make network stakeholders' expectations explicit. [Appendix A, table 1. Logic Model Development Guidance](#) covers guidance on developing a logic model. [Appendix A, figure 1](#) includes an example of a logic model template.

Network Service Delivery Strategies

Ideally decisions about service delivery strategies are grounded in evidence that suggests that the strategy will help produce positive results and is informed by valid and reliable data (for example, community child care supply and demand studies, FCC provider needs assessments, statewide child care workforce studies). In addition, networks should consider the reality of using specific strategies (for example, relationship-based professional development, coaching on FCC quality measurement tools, or warm lines) based on the following:

- ◆ The expressed interests, strengths, and needs of FCC providers;
- ◆ The community context for the network and FCC, including other resources and services for families;
- ◆ Ways to avoid duplication and maximize partnering with resources across all sectors (for example, health, early learning, family support and community institutions);
- ◆ Analysis of the services available and FCC providers' barriers to accessing these, such as opportunities for trainings and professional development;
- ◆ Opportunities for training and coordination across resources for other early learning programs (for example, schools and centers);
- ◆ Available personnel and funding;
- ◆ Time it takes to achieve the intermediate outcomes; and
- ◆ Capacity to simultaneously offer multiple network services to FCC providers.

Unlike quality improvement initiatives that may be time-limited or focused on only one mode of service delivery (for example, a training series), networks have the capacity to offer combinations of linked services, such as a practice-based professional development opportunity accompanied by relationship-based professional

development (for example, coaching, mentoring). Networks can also build a continuum based on levels of intensity and volume of services; participating FCC providers are engaged on this continuum based on their strengths and needs.

Select Strategies That Networks May Implement

There are many strategies or activities that networks may engage in to support FCC quality and service delivery. In addition to considering the research on network strategies, network leaders should consider the most common needs of FCC providers and the activities that will best address those needs, including the following:

- ◆ **Coaching and consultation:** Network staff may deliver coaching and consultation support through FCC home visits, phone calls, emails, group meetings, webinars, or other locally designed strategies. This consultation includes support to pursue licensing of FCC homes.
- ◆ **Training and professional development:** Network staff may support FCC access to types of learning opportunities that best suit their unique professional learning needs and workplace conditions – e.g. distance learning, professional learning offered across multiple languages, topical trainings at community sites or onsite at FCC homes, and connecting FCC providers to credit-bearing professional learning opportunities as well as non-traditional hours for training.
- ◆ **Connections to peers, professional support, and the community:** Network staff may host network meetings to increase provider opportunities for peer and professional connections, use meetings and communication to share information on community resources, and gather input on FCC provider needs to support future network services.
- ◆ **Quality initiatives:** Network staff may support FCC providers in all components of the necessary processes to participate in a quality rating and improvement system; engage in the workforce registry or pursue additional professional qualifications, such as the Child Development Associate; support establishing Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships to build quality and access; and to launch the process, or renewal, of formal accreditation of the FCC home.
- ◆ **Operational supports:** Networks may support FCC operations through the administration of the Child and Adult Care Food Program on behalf of FCC providers; child care subsidy administration for FCC families; enrollment of children in FCC homes; trainings in business best practices; and staff relief such as access to teaching floaters or a substitute pool to allow provider time out of the home.
- ◆ **Business services:** Networks may offer business services for FCC providers, including tax preparation, human resources support, payroll servicing, shared services such as back office supports, loans, and help securing materials such as business supplies and appropriate technology.

Relationship-Based Approaches to Support

Relationship-based approaches to supporting high-quality child care involves one-on-one engagement between network staff and providers that is respectful and responsive to the needs and circumstances of providers and children in their care. Networks that offer relationship-based supports to FCC providers include visits to programs focused on helping providers work with children and families as well as opportunities for reciprocal conversations and feedback with network staff via warm lines and other one-on-one interactions (Bromer, Van Haitsma, Daley, & Modigliani, 2009). Relationship-based supports may help reduce the isolation many providers experience due to the nature of their work environment and impact whether providers access additional professional and personal resources (Porter & Paulsell, 2011).

Components of relationship-based support for providers may include providing emotional support such as personal and professional encouragement, nurturing, and confidentiality as explained in a study of family child care providers who participated in an Early Head Start program (Buell, et. al., 2002). Cultural sensitivity is another component of relationship-based practice and requires that network staff understand and respect the cultural and

community contexts in which providers work and tailor their approaches to support the daily realities and circumstances of providers' lives (Shivers, Sanders, & Westbrook, 2011).

Relationship-based approaches to network supports:

- are strength-based—support builds on providers' knowledge, strengths, and interests;
- are responsive to providers' perspectives, circumstances, and needs;
- offer emotional support and encouragement;
- ensure provider confidentiality;
- are culturally sensitive;
- encourage two-way communication and feedback among network staff and providers; and
- emphasize problem solving and information sharing.

The quality of communication between network staff and providers is another key component of high-quality network support to FCC providers. Communication that is most likely to lead to positive changes in provider practices with children and families focuses on seeking clarification rather than making assumptions and using open-ended and reflective questioning to gather information about and understand providers' perspectives and experiences (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2012).

Select aspects of implementing a relationship-based approach are as follows:

- ◆ Network staff are assigned a caseload of FCC homes and work with these homes continuously, as opposed to having staff rotate through the FCC homes in the network.
- ◆ The ratio of FCC homes to network staff should remain low enough to ensure the development of a relationship between the provider and the network staff.
- ◆ The network uses many different communication methods, supportive of the individual needs of the FCC providers and allowing for two-way communication and feedback from the providers (such as weekly emails or texts, monthly newsletters, phone calls, printed materials). FCC providers receive communication from the network as well as the individual network staff assigned to the FCC home.
- ◆ The network establishes a mission as well as values and guiding principles for the work of FCC support, and engages staff, providers, and management in the process of creating and holding each other accountable to them.
- ◆ The network staff reviews and reflects on its work at least once a year, through a self-assessment that evaluates the process, the outcomes, and the fidelity to the mission, values, and guiding principles outlined in the plan.

Network Staff Training and Support

FCC settings are very different from center-based child care programs. To adequately support FCC providers, network staff may require specialized training in how to work with FCC providers, including training on the following topics:

- ◆ Infant and toddler child care within mixed-age groups;
- ◆ Quality improvement initiatives;
- ◆ Business practices; and

- ◆ Home child care environments (Bromer & Weaver, 2016).

Network staff need to know how to best work with adult learners and be mindful of the fact that they’re entering providers’ homes, as well as their businesses; this requires heightened sensitivity and respect.

Supervision and support for network staff may also enhance network staff’s capacity and effectiveness in working with FCC providers, which involves building strong and trusting relationships. *Reflective supervision* gives network staff the chance to gain a deeper understanding of their own beliefs and how those beliefs impact their work with FCC providers. Network staff who have regular opportunities to reflect with a supervisor about their work with providers may feel more confident and effective in their roles.

Reflective supervision is widely noted in the early childhood field as a key component of relationship-based professional development. Peer support, including opportunities to share strategies and problem solve with other staff, is also important for network specialists as working with family child care can carry its own challenges of isolation and emotional intensity. The Office of Head Start’s Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) provides an audio conference recording and additional resources related to supporting professionals through reflective supervision at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/audio/reflective-supervision-setting-foundation-reflective-practice-your-program>.

A Stage-Based Framework for Implementing Staffed FCC Networks

The stage-based framework for implementing a staffed FCC network involves four stages: exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation. In addition, implementation research has included the identification of a set of *three core implementation components*: using teams to lead implementation efforts, using data and feedback loops to inform decision-making and continuous improvement, and developing a sustainable implementation infrastructure. These core implementation components are threaded throughout each implementation stage (Metz et al, 2015). [Figure 1, in appendix B, An Integrated Stage-Based Conceptual Framework for Network Implementation](#), illustrates how the three core implementation elements are mapped across each of the implementation stages.

Network Implementation Team Core Competencies

Knowledge and application of the following:

- Networks and/or FCC quality improvement strategies;
- FCC quality improvement implementation/or network infrastructures;
- Continuous quality improvement; and
- System change.

Core Implementation Components

1. Using Teams to Lead Implementation Efforts

Implementation teams are groups of individuals who have the task of intentionally monitoring and supporting various aspects of network implementation. Teams may include key personnel such as network coordinators, FCC providers, and key stakeholders (for example, parents, program developers, funders, child care resource and referral staff, training and technical assistance organizations, community members). Members of the team should mirror the race, language, and culture of the FCC providers that are engaged, or will be. Ideally implementation teams are established at every level of the program or to target different aspects of the network. For example, a statewide network implementation model of regionally administered and locally implemented networks may require implementation teams at the state, regional, and local levels to support this larger scale initiative.

Network implementation teams should have adequate knowledge and skills in a number of specific areas in order to be effective team members. Teams should contain one or more members who are knowledgeable about

networks and/or FCC quality improvement efforts, understand the implementation infrastructure necessary to support networks, and are committed to using data and feedback loops for continuous improvement.

2. Using Data and Feedback Loops to Inform Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement

Successful network implementation relies on continuous quality improvement (CQI) through the regular assessment and feedback of data across network planning, implementation, and outcomes. This process can be as simple as soliciting informal verbal feedback about what worked well and what could be improved in the future during planning calls or team meetings. This element is also critical for shoring up feedback loops and connecting current child care policy (for example, CCDBG reauthorization, child care licensing rules and regulations) to practice. Continuous improvement cycles should demonstrate the *Plan, Do, Study, Act* cycle on an organizational scale (see the *Plan, Do, Study, Act* webpage at <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/learn-implementation/improvement-cycles>).

3. Developing a Sustainable Implementation Infrastructure

General infrastructure capacity refers to skills or characteristics (at the individual level) and the overall functioning (at the organizational and community levels) associated with the ability to implement or improve a network. For example, when developing general infrastructure capacity to undertake network development, organizations would want to focus on hiring individuals with adequate FCC quality improvement knowledge and background in working with FCC providers. At the organizational level, building the infrastructure capacity for a network would involve developing a clear mission, strong leadership, an effective organizational structure, a good working climate, adequate technology, and data-informed decision-making processes. At the community level, building general infrastructure capacity would focus on leadership opportunities for network staff, and bringing additional resources to the network to elevate FCC providers to the next level of quality or accreditation, and making connections outside of the network to build cross-sector community linkages, including links with health, family support, and early learning sectors.

Five Steps to Community Assessment: A Workbook for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Serving Hispanic and Other Emerging Populations (2007). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head, available at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/mang-sys/planning/FiveStepstoCom.htm>. This resource describes the process of conducting a community assessment. There are worksheets, checklists, and charts for each step and information about how to write a community assessment report. URLs for e-resources on demographics, health, and other topics are provided.

Stages of Implementation

Stage I: Exploration

The first stage of network implementation is exploration. It occurs well before a network is on the ground. It can also occur if a network has been operating long enough to reassess whether the current approach is the best fit for FCC providers. Team activities in this stage include assessing FCC community needs, considering possibilities for meeting those needs, judging feasibility of different network models to meet identified needs, and developing a network action plan and necessary resources for its implementation. To determine if a network is feasible and if States and communities are ready, early childhood leaders and stakeholders should do one or more of the following activities:

- ◆ Complete an assessment of a community and/or FCC providers' needs and strengths in that community;
- ◆ Engage in discussions with FCC providers (consider both focus groups and one-on-one conversations) to gather information on their needs and develop an understanding of the barriers they face to accessing existing resources;
- ◆ Explore key considerations for implementation of team activities, use of data and feedback loops, and network implementation activities; and/or
- ◆ Conduct a scan of available resources to support network implementation;

Engaging in these activities will increase the likelihood a network's efforts are informed by timely and accurate data collection and information on a state or community's readiness for network implementation. A resource available soon² to State child care system leaders to determine and/or validate the need to adopt a network approach is the *Policies and Practices Supporting Access to High-Quality Family Child Care: A Self-Assessment and Planning Tool for States, Territories and Tribes*. This resource helps States identify if they have key systems in place to pursue FCC quality and supply building strategies.

Exploring Key Considerations for Network Implementation

There are many activities and conditions that need to be addressed in the exploration stage. [Appendix C, table 1, Stage I: Exploring the Feasibility of and Planning for a Staffed Family Child Care Network](#), based on Active Implementation Framework (Metz, Naom, Halle, & Bartley, 2015), provides a series of questions to guide the process. Answering the questions in this table will help a user determine the scope and focus of a network and help complete network logic modelling and/or action planning. It is a useful source of data for a team or group of individuals beginning or revisiting the execution of a network. Data to answer key considerations in appendix C, table 1 may originate from the following:

- ◆ Early Head Start and Head Start community assessments;
- ◆ A scan of available statewide and community-based FCC resources;
- ◆ Analysis of resources available to diverse (racially, linguistically, and socioeconomically) groups of families and FCC providers;
- ◆ Resource and need data from other stakeholders, such as community centers, immigrant service organizations, faith-based groups, healthcare services, and human service entities;
- ◆ Statewide FCC professional development needs assessments;
- ◆ States' current CCDF plans; and/or
- ◆ Other statewide and community data and/or reports (for example, Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership child care resource and referral, and school readiness data).

Ohio Network RFP

This request for proposal for Family Child Care Network Services in Ohio is an example of a funder's strategy to select a network organizational structure. The proposal outlines what kind of expectations the network funder has for organizations considering network sponsorship. It can be accessed here https://www.hcjfs.org/RFP/In-Active%20RFPs/FamChldNetwork_07-016.pdf

² When available, this resource will be on the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance's webpage at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/national-center-early-childhood-quality-assurance>.

Stage II. Installation

During the installation stage, new services are not yet being delivered, however necessary individual and organizational competencies and supporting infrastructure are being established so that networks can be successfully put in place in the near future. [Appendix C, table 2, Stage II: Network Installation Considerations](#) covers the considerations network implementation teams should address during this stage of the project.

During this time network teams actively build their capacity to support implementation of innovations selected during the exploration stage. Implementation teams gather data during this phase and make any adjustments to the network approach or to the network implementation supports (for example, training, coaching, leadership strategies) or infrastructure (for example, data collection processes) to facilitate the network's success. This infrastructure takes on many forms across levels of network implementation, including selecting the organizational structure, recruiting staff and training staff, securing necessary contracts, finding space and equipment, securing organizational supports such as monetary and human capital, and developing new or strengthening existing operating policies and procedures.

Selecting the Network's Organizational Sponsor

Completing the exploration stage will help teams identify what type of organization is needed and what process to use in selecting a network administrative home. For example, the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services in Ohio solicited a request for proposals (RFP) for the purchase of FCC network services aimed at ensuring quality child care options for eligible families in Hamilton County and improving the quality of early learning in FCC homes. The RFP communicates expectations for the network home.

If it is determined that a fiscal administrative home is the most appropriate approach to implementing a network, partners may use a checklist to define and review roles and responsibilities and outline these in a contractual agreement. While agreements can and should be reviewed and revised over time, a strong agreement forged early in the partnership lays the foundation for a strong and sustainable collaboration. Networks and contracting agencies may use the *Checklist for Developing a Partnership Agreement or Contract* (2014), by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head and Office of Child Care, available at https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/quilt_checklist_developing_partnershipagreementcontract_0.pdf as they develop or review their partnership agreements.

Exploring Funding Resources

The logic model and corresponding action plan that implementation teams develop provides clarity on required financial resources for network start-up and implementation. At least 18 States and Territories report using CCDF funds to support network efforts. Implementation teams can also access a variety of other funding options to supplement CCDF financial supports. States and communities can also apply for grants and loans to help launch networks. The federal government (aside from CCDF), commercial banks, and credit unions are common sources of loans. However, loans require networks to pay interest on the amount borrowed. Grants are awarded without an expectation of repayment. In addition, some local businesses offer financial incentives to child care related businesses as a strategy to support employee retention by making child care more readily available. In some communities, FCC providers can even seek financial resources for home improvements.

Information on Federal Grants and Loans

- ◆ Grants.gov has information about more than 1,000 federal grant programs involving 26 federal grant-making agencies. Information on the site can guide you through the process of applying for federal funds.
- ◆ GovLoans.gov has government loan information.

- ◆ U.S. Small Business Administration (<https://www.sba.gov/>) offers a wide variety of loan programs. Minority-owned businesses and women-owned businesses sometimes receive priority over other applicants.

Philanthropy

Foundation Grants to Individuals Online (<http://gtonline.foundationcenter.org/>) is a nonprofit service organization that offers an online listing of grants to individuals in the United States. First Children’s Finance (FCF) (<http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/>) provides financing tools and resources for making business plans for child care centers and FCC providers. It provides loans to new child care centers and FCC providers in selected areas. It also supports expansion, quality improvements, and operations of existing programs. Local community foundations and other philanthropic groups are also good candidates to support networks. All Our Kin Inc., a network in Connecticut, receives support from the Cafritz Foundation and the Washington Women’s Foundation because its mission aligns with entrepreneurial and economic networks for women’s financial stability.

In addition, the SURDNA Foundation located in New York writes extensively about FCC as a community development strategy. The foundation advocates that the most successful FCC supports are implemented through community-based institutions offering a combination of services in both business and child development to address the multi-layered needs of providers.

Community Foundation Support for Networks and FCC Supports

The report, entitled *Strengthening Family Child Care in Low-Income Communities (2001)* by the SURDNA Foundation available at http://www.surdna.org/images/stories/content_img/docs/pubs/childcare.pdf, shows how community-based nonprofits are key to the emergence of a supportive infrastructure for FCC. The report provides an in-depth look at how FCC systems and networks serve to support, organize, and increase the supply and quality of family child care.

Microenterprise Grants

Many networks will meet the definition of microenterprise—a small child care related business with five or fewer employees that requires initial capital of \$35,000 or less. Organizations that offer services and loans that can help sustain network implementation are highlighted in the *Child Care as a Business Resource Guide for Program Administrators* (2010), Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families available at <https://idaresources.acf.hhs.gov/page?pageid=a047000000Dej3ZAAR>. The guide has information on starting or improving a child care business, accessing funding opportunities, and improving physical business infrastructure. It can be accessed at <https://idaresources.acf.hhs.gov/page?pageid=a047000000Dej3ZAAR>

Developing a Budget

Preparing a budget will give an implementation team a picture of whether projected income will meet expected expenses. The following resources accessible on the *Child Care Aware of America* website <http://childcareaware.org/providers/planning-for-success/preparing-a-budget/> may help in preparing a network budget and subsequently support networks to help future FCC providers develop a budget:

- ◆ This *Center Cash Flow Projection worksheet* developed by First Children’s Finance helps Networks and FCC providers project revenue cash flow estimates for their business model It can be accessed here www.firstchildrensfinance.org/businessresourcecenter/wp-content/blogs.dir/2/files/2015/01/Tool-Center-Cash-Flow-Template-and-Sample-6-20031.xls
- ◆ This *Center Sources and Uses* worksheet helps child care centers identify possible sources for funds and the planned uses for specific funds. This resource from First Children’s Finance can be located at

<http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/businessresourcecenter/wp-content/blogs.dir/2/files/2011/06/Tool-Center-Sources-and-Uses.doc>

- ◆ The *Developing a Financial Management Plan* resource developed by the U.S. Small Business Administration has worksheets for a start-up budget for a child care business, an operating budget and tracking monthly operating expenses. The resource can be accessed at https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/pub_mp29.pdf

Estimating the Cost of Staffed Family Child Care Networks

The **Cost Estimation Tool** for networks is designed to help organizations estimate the basic costs of operating a network. The goal of this tool is to function as a dynamic model for estimating the operating costs of a network with different services and levels of service intensity in different state and community contexts. The tool builds on other resources available regarding networks, and supports an understanding of the expense associated with implementing a staffed network. The tool includes a set of core services to be delivered by the staffed FCC network and presents these as a model that varies with the intensity or volume of the service. The services outlined as core to a network have been informed by research about ways to improve the quality of FCC.

Stage III. Initial Implementation

During the initial implementation stage, network service delivery is first put into place and made available to FCC providers. The key activities of the initial implementation stage involve strategies to promote continuous improvement. [Table 3, Stage III: Initial Implementation](#) in appendix C, covers key considerations for implementation teams at this stage of network implementation. Six questions to promote continuous improvement during initial implementation are as follows:

1. What does the network look like now?
2. Are we satisfied with how the network service delivery model looks?
3. How will we know if we've been successful with network implementation?
4. What can we do to maintain the success?
5. What can we do to make the network more efficient and durable?
6. What possibilities exist for expanding the reach of the network?

Administering a Network

Identifying Staff Qualifications

Completing the exploration and installation stages as well as a logic model will support the identification of network staff qualifications. Specific elements of the logic model will drive the roles and responsibilities of network staff, which should subsequently determine the qualifications for various network personnel. In developing the logic model, one should consider whether staff should be of similar background, such as race and language spoken, to the FCC providers they will work with and the importance of staff understanding the context of the neighborhoods and communities they will work in. Other qualifications to consider include: a degree in child development or a related field; experience working in the early care and education field; experience working with FCC providers, and knowledge of FCC programs and supports.

Roles and Responsibilities

FCC network specialists may be expected to support FFN caregivers becoming licensed, help FCC providers advance along a State's quality framework, plan and conduct training sessions on site for FCC providers, or provide technical support to the network during program evaluation.

All Our Kin, Inc., a Connecticut-based nonprofit organization, provides the services and supports of a FCC network. Its position equivalent to a network specialist is an early childhood educational consultant. All Our Kin seeks candidates who can provide mentoring, coaching, training, technical assistance, and support to family child care providers. The consultant reports to a regional network director. (See the full job description for the educational consultant in [appendix E](#)).

Some responsibilities for this specialist/consultant include the following:

- ◆ Offering professional development to help providers improve the quality of their care;
- ◆ Visiting providers at home to conduct assessments and offer one-on-one program support, such as curriculum planning, model lessons, mentoring, coaching, guided practice and feedback, goal setting, and other support as needed;
- ◆ Problem-solving and collaborating with providers to design responsive strategies;
- ◆ Linking providers to community resources and supports;
- ◆ Designing and facilitating trainings;
- ◆ Responding to provider inquiries or requests via email or phone;
- ◆ Organizing and attending evening monthly meetings and occasional weekend events;

Stage IV. Full Network Implementation

Evaluation of Network Services

Evaluation, the fourth stage, is a critical element in programs' implementation and should be used to validate the efficacy and continued implementation of networks, as well as inform the CQI of network services. Network process and outcome evaluation will look at impacts/benefits/changes to FCC providers (as a result of the network efforts) during and/or after their network participation. As addressed in the logic model, evaluation will examine these types of changes in the short, intermediate, and long term. [Table 4, Stage IV: Full Network Implementation Considerations](#) in appendix C, explores key considerations for ongoing support of network implementation, sustainability, and CQI.

Levels of Evaluation

There are four levels of evaluation information networks can gather from FCC providers:

1. Reactions and feelings (note that feelings are often poor indicators that the service made a lasting impact);
2. Learning (enhanced attitudes, perceptions, or knowledge);
3. Changes in skills (applied learning to enhance behaviors)
4. Effectiveness (improved performance because of enhanced behaviors).

The more the network evaluation is able to capture data at each of these levels, the richer and more useful the evaluation will serve in CQI. See [table 5. Network Evaluation Data Collection Methods](#) in appendix C, for examples.

Selecting an Evaluator

When choosing an evaluator, planning teams should consider evaluator credentials, past experience, and the level of expertise. Whether networks choose professional evaluators, community volunteers, or some combination, they need to think carefully about the goodness of fit between the evaluator and the network. How do the network's needs and interests fit in with those of the evaluator? What about the range and quality of their communication skills? Are they culturally sensitive? Are they willing to work as partners with the network and community?

If hiring an external evaluator is cost-prohibitive, teams can still use evaluation methods and benefit from learning about what the network is doing well and how its services can be improved. At the same time, there is a strong chance that data about the network may be interpreted with some bias if data are analyzed by the people responsible for ensuring the network is effective and accomplishing its desired outcomes. Network coordinators and staff may find that objectively evaluating their own work is a difficult task. If possible, network coordinators should have someone outside the network conduct its evaluation and examine and determine the results. Networks may want to consider a multiple-level approach to evaluation—one that addresses the high cost of external evaluation. First the network works with an expert to establish an internal evaluation plan and data tracking mechanisms. Next, based on the available resources, the network conducts an external evaluation every 3 to 5 years as a part of the feedback mechanism.

Designing the Evaluation

There are four main steps to developing an evaluation plan:

1. Identify network objectives and goals;
2. Develop evaluation questions;
3. Develop evaluation methods; and
4. Set up a timeline for evaluation activities.

Identifying Program Objectives and Goals

The first step in designing an evaluation is to clarify the network objectives and goals. What are the main things to be accomplished, and what has been established to accomplish them? Clarifying these will help identify which major program components should be evaluated. Completing a logic model for the network is one way to accomplish this step.

Developing Evaluation Questions and Evaluation Methods

Consider the following key questions when designing a network evaluation:

- ◆ What purpose will the evaluation serve? What does the network want to know and decide as a result of the evaluation?
- ◆ Who are the audiences for the information from the evaluation? For example, CCDF Lead Agency, funders, FCC providers, and/or network partners?
- ◆ What kinds of data need to inform the evaluation? For example, FCC quality measures and/or questionnaires (note that the network logic model should contain much of this information)?

- ◆ Who will provide the evaluation data? For example, network staff, FCC providers, partners, and/or funders?
- ◆ How will the data be collected? For example, online questionnaires, family interviews, observations of FCC providers, and/or employees?
- ◆ When is the information needed (which determines when must it be collected)?
- ◆ What resources are available to collect the information?

There are four main categories of evaluation questions. The *Community Tool Box* (KU Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2017) lists examples of possible questions and suggested methods to answer those questions.

- ◆ **Network planning and implementation issues:** How well was the network planned out, and how well was that plan put into practice?
 - Possible questions: Who participates? Is there diversity among participants? Why do FCC providers enter and leave the network? Are there a variety of network services and alternative activities generated? Do those FCC providers most in need of help receive network services?
 - Possible methods to answer those questions: a monitoring system that tracks actions and accomplishments related to the network's goals, network affiliate survey of satisfaction with goals, and member survey of satisfaction with outcomes.
- ◆ **Assessing attainment of network objectives:** How well has the network met its stated objectives?
 - Possible questions: How many FCC providers participate in the network? How many hours of training do FCC providers receive from Network consultants?
 - Possible methods to answer those questions: a monitoring system that tracks actions and accomplishments related to the network's goals, an FCC network member survey of satisfaction with professional development, and goal attainment scaling.
- ◆ **Network impact on FCC providers:** How much and what kind of a difference has the network made for FCC providers?
 - Possible questions: How has FCC provider behavior or program quality changed as a result of participation in the program? Are FCC providers satisfied with their experiences? Has participation reduced their sense of isolation and/or increased their connection with peers? Were there any negative results from FCC provider participation in the program? What economic indicators of impact on the FCC providers could be tracked (for example, comparing provider earning before and after network participation)?
 - Possible methods to answer those questions: a network member survey of satisfaction with goals; member survey of satisfaction with outcomes; behavioral surveys; interviews with FCC providers; pre- and post-assessments of provider knowledge, skills, and attitudes; and observational assessments (for example, the *Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale—Revised Edition*).
- ◆ **Network impact on the community:** How much and what kind of a difference has the network made on the community as a whole?
 - Possible questions: What resulted from the network implementation? Were there any negative results from network services? Do the benefits of the network outweigh the costs?
 - Possible methods to answer those questions: behavioral surveys, interviews with key informants, and community-level indicators.

Ongoing Support of the Network

During full implementation, the network organization or structure needs to be able to make the changes necessary to support ongoing network CQI. Infrastructure considerations during full implementation include the following:

- ◆ Increasing network efficiency;
- ◆ Building network staff competency while maintaining effective network practices;
- ◆ Producing more efficient and/or effective organizational supports; and
- ◆ Monitoring systems alignment.

Supervision and support for network staff may enhance their capacity and effectiveness. FCC network staff who have regular opportunities to reflect with a supervisor about their work with providers may feel more confident and effective in their roles. Peer support, including opportunities to share strategies and problem solve with other staff, is also important for network staff, as working with FCC providers can be isolating and challenging at times.

Conclusion

FCC providers are a diverse group of early childhood professionals who have a different set of needs than their early childhood counterparts in center-based programs. States and Territories have the capacity to positively impact young children and families in child care when they commit to adopting promising practices and strategies to support FCC providers in delivering positive and nurturing early care and learning environments. Networks can positively impact FCC providers' ability to offer care that respects and reflects the individual needs of children and their specific family dynamics. States and FCC provider stakeholders can use this manual to reflect on key considerations and questions necessary to effectively develop, implement, and/or sustain networks.

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Appendix A – Logic Models

Table 1. Logic Model Development Guidance

Logic Model Elements	Guidance	Examples
Overarching Goals	Enter the overarching goal(s) of the work. These goals typically will not be completely within the program’s sphere of control, but the program works to impact these overarching goals. These are often population-level, broad-based outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Increase the number of licensed FCC providers. ◆ Increase the number of quality FCC homes. ◆ Increase retention and professional development of FCC providers. ◆ Increase the number of FCC providers from underserved communities. ◆ Increase the cultural and linguistic capacity of existing FCC providers
Priorities	Briefly summarize the rationale or context for why the strategies have been selected. Enter short phrases that summarize the problem, any mandates the program is under, higher level priorities. Context should be more fully fleshed out in the action plan that accompanies this logical model..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ FCC provider recruitment. ◆ FCC provider professional development. ◆ FCC provider accreditations.
Inputs	Describe the existing resources that are available prior to program implementation. These could be reflective of human resources, technology, time, equipment, and other resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Grant funding from CCDF Lead Agency. ◆ Completed FCC provider statewide needs assessment. ◆ Completed a readiness for change assessment to determine capacity for change. ◆ Identified child care resource and referral agency as fiscal administrative home.

Logic Model Elements	Guidance	Examples
Outputs	<p>Describe, at a high level, what the network does, and for whom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Strategies: a strategy is a broad approach by which the network will achieve its objectives. These are not the specific day-to-day activities. They describe clusters of activities and tasks that will be conducted in order to accomplish the outcomes. Strategies should be written using action words such as form workgroup, gather data, conduct survey. Strategies will become more thorough when you describe their associated milestones/key activities in the action plan. ◆ Participation: Describe the immediate target population associated with the strategy (e.g., FFN providers). In other words, it will describe who the strategy impacts. 	<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Facilitate FCC quality improvement communities of practice. ◆ Provide onsite coaching for FCC providers on FCC quality measures. ◆ Deliver technical assistance to family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers on how to become licensed FCC providers. ◆ Implement family place libraries. <p>Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ FCC providers. ◆ FFN care providers. ◆ Professional development providers. ◆ Quality rating and improvement system coaches. ◆ Staffed FCC network consultants.
Outcomes	<p>Outcomes refer to the changes that are expected to occur as a direct result of implementing the strategies. They often reflect a change in attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, skills, status, or level of functioning. Short-term outcomes can typically be accomplished in one to three years and are often expressed at the level of individual change. Intermediate-term outcomes may take 4 to 6 years. These usually build on the progress expected by the short-term outcomes. Outcomes are written as objectives in your action plan.</p>	<p>Short Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Improved FCC health and safety practices. ◆ More FCC providers with infant/toddler credentials. <p>Intermediate Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ten percent more FCC homes exceed child care licensing requirements for health and safety after three years ◆ After two years of Network complementation, 20 percent more licenses FCC providers receive in relationship-based professional development.

Logic Model Elements	Guidance	Examples
Impact	Impacts are the long-term changes that are expected to happen if the strategies are carried out effectively and/or are sustained. These are often about conditions, and may take seven to ten years to accomplish.	<p>Long Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Each region in the State has fully staffed and operating FCC network. ◆ Child care licensing and QRIS partner with Networks to provide quality coaching ◆ Networks provide quality improvement support to all FCC programs participating in their QRIS
Logic Assumptions	Describe the logic behind your underlying assumptions about why the strategies will produce the desired short-term outcomes, and why the short-term outcomes will lead to long-term outcomes and impacts. Include any evidence-based linkages, where applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Research links relationship-based coaching on quality assessments as a promising practice to increase FCC provider quality. ◆ Research shows that implementation teams can increase the success of network implementation.
External Factors	Describe the environment surrounding your program. You may want to describe the political environment and how it impacts your work, any pending changes that need to be monitored, or stakeholders concerns to be addressed.	On November 19, 2014, the President signed into law bipartisan legislation that reauthorized the CCDBG Act for the first time since 1996. The law made many important statutory changes focused on reforming child care to better support the success of both parents and children in low-income families and increase their access to healthy, safe, high-quality child care.
Evaluation Focus	<p>Describe any external factors that could influence the success of your program or that may need to be monitored throughout. This element is optional.</p> <p>Evaluation focus–Outputs: Briefly describe what outputs might need to be evaluated.</p> <p>Evaluation focus–Outcomes: Briefly describe what outcomes might need to be evaluated.</p>	<p>Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reach of training efforts. ◆ Number of quality assessments conducted. ◆ Number of FCC programs with coaches <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Improvement in FCC program quality as measured by quality assessment. ◆ Increase in FCC provider self-efficacy.

Appendix B – Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: An Integrated Stage-Based Conceptual Framework for Network Implementation

Implementation Component	Network Exploration	Network Installation	Initial Network Implementation	Full Network Implementation
Network Implementation Teams	Form network implementation teams; develop team work and communication protocols	Establish or adopt network implementation team competences; confirm availability of resources to support network(s)	Problem solve what is and is not working in the network and use data at each meeting to promote improvement	Use network CQI data; develop and test improvements
Data and Feedback Loops	Conduct needs assessment; develop network logic model; determine fit and feasibility and readiness	Assess network infrastructure gaps; implement network policy practice feedback loops and assess team competencies	Assess network usage and test data to stabilize an evidence-based approach	Assess network outcomes; collect data to determine fidelity and quality improvement directions
Implementation Infrastructure	Determine necessary system components to support practice and organization and system change	Develop required infrastructure elements to support network practice and organization and systems change	Improve network elements to support network practice and organization and systems change	Maintain data-informed practice; produce more efficient and/or effective system to support desired outcomes

Source: *An integrated stage-based framework for implementation of early childhood programs and systems* (OPRE Research Brief OPRE 2015-48). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/es_ccepra_stage_based_framework_brief_508.pdf

Appendix C – Stages of Network Development

Table 1. Stage I: Exploring the Feasibility of and Planning for a Staffed Family Child Care (FCC) Network

Core Features and Activities of Staffed FCC Network Implementation Teams	Core Uses of Data and Feedback Loops for Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement	Core Activities to Develop Implementation
<p>Selection and Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has a team been formed to serve as an accountable structure for facilitating stage-based implementation of a staffed FCC network? ◆ Were team members mutually selected into their roles by volunteering for roles they were encouraged to apply? ◆ Does each team contain one or more members who are knowledgeable about FCC quality improvement supports, implementation infrastructure, and use of data to inform decision-making and improvements, and systems change? ◆ Do members represent practice, supervisory, leadership, and policy perspectives either on a single team or through a linked teaming structure? ◆ Does the team include program developers or intermediary organizations? <p>Development of a Team Charter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the team have a charter or “terms of reference” (internal memorandum of understanding) that describes how it functions, communicates, makes decisions, and moves forward with its mission and objectives? 	<p>Needs Assessment and Fit and Feasibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Needs: What are the needs of the target population (e.g., family, friend, and neighbor providers; licensed FCC providers serving dual language learners)? ◆ Fit: Does the network fit (or fight) with current projects, context, organizational, and systems values and philosophies? ◆ Resources: What resources will be available to the network? What system should we choose to implement the network? ◆ Evidence: What is the evidence that a network will work? Under what circumstances and with what target populations was this evidence generated? What outcomes can we expect if we implement the network well? ◆ Readiness for Replication: How well defined is the network? Do we know the core components that make the network work? Will program development be necessary? How involved will the developer or intermediary organization be? 	<p>Planning for the Implementation Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Implementations teams need to ask how they will be planning for the network infrastructure. <p>Infrastructure to Support Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Are FCC providers open to the idea of a network? ◆ Are the potential organizational mission, leadership, and climate aligned with the network? ◆ Will staff with the necessary prerequisites be available? ◆ Is training available and affordable? Does training meet best practices for skill development? ◆ Who will provide coaching and supervision? ◆ What steps will we need to take to ensure a coaching plan is in place? ◆ How will staff performance be assessed? What steps are needed to ensure a performance assessment system is in place?

Core Features and Activities of Staffed FCC Network Implementation Teams	Core Uses of Data and Feedback Loops for Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement	Core Activities to Develop Implementation
<p>Development of a Linked Communication Protocol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has the team developed a “linked communication protocol” to provide accountability for making decisions and providing feedback? <p>Frequency of Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the core implementation team convene twice a month at a minimum (weekly recommended) at this stage? ◆ How often do ancillary teams (e.g., leadership team, community advisory board) meet? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Capacity: Will early childhood practitioners meet minimum qualifications for implementation? Can we make the necessary structural, instrumental, and financial changes necessary? ◆ Sustainability: Are there sufficient resources and capacity to sustain the network through full implementation and beyond? <p>Decisions Teams Make During Exploration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Will the proposed network meet the needs? ◆ Does the team have what it takes to move forward? ◆ Is moving forward both desirable and feasible? ◆ How will these decisions be communicated to others? 	<p>Infrastructure to Support Organization and Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Are there the necessary community connections and resources to move forward with the network? ◆ What questions will we need to answer to ensure that implementation is happening as planned? ◆ Where will we get this data? ◆ What technology needs do we have? ◆ What administrative practices may need to change to support network implementation? ◆ What policies, procedures, or processes need to be developed or revised? <p>What systems alignment issues will need to be addressed to facilitate network implementation?</p>

Note: Format of this table is from *An integrated stage-based framework for implementation of early childhood programs and systems* (OPRE Research Brief OPRE 2015-48). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/es_ccepra_stage_based_framework_brief_508.pdf

Table 2. Stage II: Network Installation Considerations

Core Features and Activities of Staffed FCC Network Implementation Teams	Core Uses of Data and Feedback Loops for Network Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement	Core Activities to Develop Network Implementation
<p>Development of Team Competencies to Support Network Implementation</p> <p>Does the core implementation team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Know and apply FCC quality improvement strategies and/or network best practice? ◆ Know and apply the FCC quality improvement implementation infrastructures? ◆ Know and apply FCC quality improvement cycles? ◆ Know and apply systems change? <p>Development of Policy Practice Feedback Loops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has the team developed active processes to gather practice-level information (e.g., barriers to implementation) from FCC providers and network coordinators implementing the new way of work and fed this information up the system to leadership? ◆ Has the team developed active processes to ensure that leadership decisions are fed back down the system to network staff? <p>Frequency of Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the core implementation team convene weekly? ◆ Does the core network implementation team meet with leadership bi-weekly? 	<p>Troubleshooting and Continuous Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Are the linked communication protocols developed during exploration in place and happening as planned? How can communication be improved? Is the network effectively engaging leadership in the process? ◆ In the event that team membership or structure changes, how can the network ensure that implementation team competencies are maintained? ◆ What changes need to be made before the network is initiated? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are changes to the network necessary? ▪ Are changes to network implementation supports (e.g., training, coaching, leadership strategies) necessary? ▪ Are changes to network data collection processes needed? ◆ Has the network implementation infrastructure we planned for during the exploration stage been developed and installed during this current stage of implementation? ◆ Are general capacities in place? ◆ Are network specific capacities in place? 	<p>Installing the Network Implementation Infrastructure Implementations teams need to ask how they will be developing and installing the network infrastructure.</p> <p>Infrastructure Support Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Have readiness plans for FCC providers and/or stakeholders increased openness to the network? ◆ Has the first cohort of network staff been selected? ◆ Has initial network training occurred? ◆ Have coaching plans been developed to support network staff in the new way of work? <p>Infrastructure to Support Network Organizations and Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has leadership expressed commitment to the network? How has this been demonstrated? ◆ Have network agreements with community partners been established? ◆ Are network partner expectations clear? ◆ Have data systems been assessed and determined to be ready (or developed to be ready)? ◆ Have policies, procedures, and processes been revised or developed to support the network?

Core Features and Activities of Staffed FCC Network Implementation Teams	Core Uses of Data and Feedback Loops for Network Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement	Core Activities to Develop Network Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How often do ancillary network teams meet? Is this often enough to support implementation? 	<p>Decisions Teams Make During Network Installation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is the implementation infrastructure installed (good enough) to move into initial implementation when customers will be seen? <p>How can the implementation infrastructure be improved before network initiation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Have systems partners been engaged?

Note: Format of this table is from An integrated stage-based framework for implementation of early childhood programs and systems (OPRE Research Brief OPRE 2015-48). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/es_ccepra_stage_based_framework_brief_508.pdf

Table 3. Stage III: Initial Network Implementation Considerations

Core Features and Activities of Staffed FCC Network Implementation Teams	Core Uses of Data and Feedback Loops for Network Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement	Core Activities to Develop Network Implementation
<p>Improvement Cycles</p> <p>Have teams engaged in different types of improvement cycles, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Usability testing to stabilize the network model; ◆ Rapid cycle problem-solving to detect strengths and gaps and develop solutions quickly; and ◆ Policy-practice feedback loops to ensure effective and efficient communication between policy and practice levels. <p>Frequency of Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the core implementation team convene monthly or less often? If less often, has this affected implementation negatively or is the innovation stable enough for less frequent meetings? ◆ Does the core implementation team meet with leadership bi-weekly or at least monthly? ◆ Are rapid cycle problem-solving teams convened as needed? ◆ When they are convened, do they meet at least once a week to address the challenge quickly and then disband? <p>Development of a Team Charter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the team need to revisit its team charter? 	<p>Troubleshooting Practitioner Competency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How satisfied are network staff with the support they have received to implement it? ◆ What are data telling showing about what is working or not working regarding network specialist selection, training, and coaching? ◆ What changes might we need to make to strengthen network specialist competency? ◆ What are early fidelity or network staff performance assessment data showing about the strength of implementation? <p>Troubleshooting Organizational Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What are the data showing about what is working or not working regarding network organizational and systems supports? ◆ What changes might need to be made to strengthen network organizational alignment? ◆ What are early outcomes showing about the potential efficacy of the network? <p>Decisions Teams Make During Initial Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How can the team continue to support the network implementation infrastructure? ◆ How can the team more effectively problem solve? 	<p>Infrastructure to Support Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What is being done to support ongoing readiness of network specialists, coordinators, and administrators? ◆ Has there been network staff turnover? How has this been addressed? ◆ Has follow-up or professional development occurred? Is this needed? ◆ Are network specialists receiving coaching as planned? <p>Infrastructure to Support Organizations and Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does leadership continue to support the network? How is this demonstrated? ◆ Are community partnerships supportive of network implementation goals? ◆ Are data systems operable? ◆ Are data reports usable? ◆ Is data entry and review built into regular practice routines? ◆ Are there policy-practice alignment or misalignment issues? How are they being addressed? ◆ Are additional system interventions needed (e.g., policy, legislative, funding, community partners)?

Core Features and Activities of Staffed FCC Network Implementation Teams	Core Uses of Data and Feedback Loops for Network Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement	Core Activities to Develop Network Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has there been turnover? How are new members on-boarded? <p>Linked Communication Protocols</p> <p>With whom (specific names, roles) in leadership, management, and the community is the network implementation team meeting and communicating? Has this been effective?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is the team asking the right questions? ◆ Is the team collecting the data needed to guide the decision-making? ◆ What changes might need to be made to implementation supports, or data collection processes? ◆ Is the team ready to move to an outcome study? 	

Note: Format of this table is from *An integrated stage-based framework for implementation of early childhood programs and systems* (OPRE Research Brief OPRE 2015-48). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/es_ccepra_stage_based_framework_brief_508.pdf

Table 4. Stage IV: Full Network Implementation Considerations

Core Features and Activities of Network Implementation Teams	Core Uses of Data and Feedback Loops for Network Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement	Core Activities to Develop Network Implementation Infrastructure (General and Innovation-Specific Capacity)
<p>Improvement Cycles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the team continue to use data and feedback mechanisms to support and improve the functioning of network system components? Please note that it is recommended that the system is formally assessed every 6 months (minimum of annually). <p>Develop and Test Enhancements</p> <p>Now that the implementation supports are routine and integrated into the system ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has the core network implementation team assessed whether enhancements to the innovation or implementation infrastructure may reduce the burden of implementation or increase efficiency of implementation and still lead to similar outcomes? ◆ Has the core implementation team assessed whether enhancements to the innovation or implementation infrastructure might improve outcomes? <p>Frequency of Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the core implementation team convene monthly or at least bi-monthly? ◆ Would implementation benefit from the team meeting more frequently? ◆ Does the network core implementation team meet with leadership bi-monthly or quarterly? 	<p>Improving Practitioner Competency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Are practitioners implementing the innovation with fidelity? ◆ How might the innovation or implementation infrastructure be enhanced to reduce the burden of implementation or increase efficiency of developing practitioner competency without compromising outcomes (enhancements)? ◆ How might the innovation or implementation infrastructure be enhanced to further improve outcomes for children (enhancements)? <p>Improving Organizational Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is the network getting the intended outcomes? ◆ How might the innovation or implementation infrastructure be enhanced to further improve outcomes for children (enhancements)? <p>Decisions Teams Make During Full Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How will the network be sustained? ◆ Is this model ready for large-scale implementation and/or scale up? ◆ Can the network innovation be scaled up? ◆ Should the team develop and test network enhancements? 	<p>Implementations teams need to ask how they will improve and sustain the network infrastructure.</p> <p>Infrastructure to Support Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Can readiness be sustained and extended to new cohorts of practitioners? ◆ Are there more efficient or effective ways to train and coach staff? If the model is scaled, would training or coaching components need to be redesigned? <p>Infrastructure to Support Organizations and Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What role can leadership play in replicating or scaling up the network if outcomes are achieved? ◆ Are community partnerships facilitative of current and future goals related to implementation (e.g., replication or scaling)? ◆ How can data systems become more efficient and practical for helping to solve network implementation challenges? ◆ If the network model is scaled, would the data system need to be altered to support more robust analysis or information sharing? ◆ What contextual changes have happened that can affect systems alignment?

Core Features and Activities of Network Implementation Teams	Core Uses of Data and Feedback Loops for Network Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement	Core Activities to Develop Network Implementation Infrastructure (General and Innovation-Specific Capacity)
<p>Development of a Team Charter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the network team need to revisit its team charter? ◆ Has there been network team turnover? How are new members on-boarded? Linked? <p>Communication Protocols</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What are network staff, supervisors, leadership, and community partners saying about the kinds of supports in place for implementation? ◆ Are feedback loops functioning as planned? Do network staff and teams feel like they are heard? ◆ Is network leadership getting the information it needs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What data will the team collect to assess the enhancements? ◆ What results will the team need to make the enhancements permanent? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How can we continue to monitor and improve alignment? ◆ Are additional system interventions needed (e.g., policy, legislative, funding, community partners)?

Note: Format of this table is from *An integrated stage-based framework for implementation of early childhood programs and systems* (OPRE Research Brief OPRE 2015-48). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/es_ccepra_stage_based_framework_brief_508.pdf

Table 5. Network Evaluation Data Collection Methods

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Questionnaires, Surveys, and Checklists	Used to quickly and/or easily get lots of information from FCC providers in a nonthreatening way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is completed anonymously ◆ Is inexpensive to administer ◆ Provides an easy way to compare and analyze information ◆ Is administered to many people ◆ Gathers lots of data ◆ Is easy to obtain; many already exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Careful feedback might not be captured ◆ Wording can be bias; providers' responses are impersonal ◆ Administering surveys may require a sampling expert ◆ Feedback gathered may miss the full story
Interviews	Used to fully understand FCC providers' impressions or experiences, or learn more about their answers to questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides a full range and depth of information ◆ Helps develop relationship with FCC providers and offers them flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Time intensive ◆ Difficult to cross compare and hard to analyze ◆ Can be costly ◆ Interviewers can be bias, which impacts responses
Documentation Review	Used to get an impression of how the network operates without interrupting operation; involves reviewing applications, finances, memos, minutes, and other related documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Gathers comprehensive and historical information ◆ Does not interrupt network operations; information already exists and there are few biases about information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Time intensive and incomplete data ◆ Requires high degree of clarity ◆ Restricted by existing data
Observation	Used to gather accurate information about how a program operates, particularly with regard to processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides a view of the network and FCC operations as they are actually occurring ◆ Can be adapted to events as they occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Difficult to interpret behaviors ◆ Requires training and reliability, and investment in psychometrically sound measures of FCC quality ◆ Can be costly

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Focus Groups	Used to explore a topic in-depth through group discussion (e.g., discussion about reactions to an experience or suggestion or common complaints); useful in evaluation and marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Quickly and reliably provides common impressions ◆ Provides an efficient way to get a range and depth of information in a short time ◆ Can convey key information about the network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Can be time consuming to analyze data ◆ Requires a good facilitator ◆ Can be difficult to schedule 6–8 people together
Case Studies	Used to fully understand or depict FCC providers' experiences in a network and to conduct a comprehensive examination through cross-comparison of cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fully depicts providers' experience in program input, process, and results ◆ Provides a powerful means to portray network to outsiders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is usually quite time-consuming to collect, organize, and describe information ◆ Represents a depth of information, rather than breadth

Appendix D – Additional Resources

- ◆ *Assessing Community Needs and Resources* (2016). Center for the Application of Prevention Strategies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, available at <https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/applying-strategic-prevention-framework/step1-assess-needs/assess-community-resources-readiness>. This resource provides an example of a process used for conducting assessments of community needs and resources. Although the emphasis is on preventing substance abuse, the process has broad application to other fields.
- ◆ *Community Tool Box* (2016). A service of the Workgroup for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas, available at <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/example>. This chapter in the online Community Tool Box offers guidance for developing logic models and includes templates, checklists, examples and tools for logic modeling.
- ◆ *Dual Language Learner Toolkit* (2017). Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, available at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/Dual%20Language%20Learners/toolkit>. This toolkit provides resources that can be used to support young children who are learning their home languages and English. It is divided into three sections: administrators and managers; teachers, caregivers, and family services staff; and families.
- ◆ *Evaluation Tools and Resources* (2017). Center for the Application of Prevention Strategies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, available at <https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/tools-learning-resources/evaluation-tools-resources>. This webpage provides a list of tools, aides, tip sheets, and resources to support network planning and management, implementation, and analysis of data and evaluations.
- ◆ *Introduction to Evaluation* (2016). Community Tool Box, Chapter 36, a service of the Workgroup for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas, available at <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation>. This chapter of the Community Tool Box provides information on how to develop an evaluation plan, identify stakeholders' interests, and conduct a participatory evaluation.
- ◆ *Logic Model Builder* (2006). Child Welfare Information Gateway, available at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/effectiveness/logic-model/>. The Logic Model Builder takes users through a step-by-step process of developing a logic model in order to plan evaluation activities. Users are able to download logic models to Microsoft Word.
- ◆ *Program Development and Evaluation* (2002). University of Wisconsin-Extension, available at <http://fyi.uwex.edu/programdevelopment/>. This free resource offers an online course on developing logic models, examples, templates and a training and teaching guide.
- ◆ *Resources to support the full participation of young children who are Dual Language Learners (DLLs) and their families*. Catlett, C., Moore, S. M., and Pérez-Méndez, C. (2017), available at <http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/other-resources/Vermont%20Resources%20Young%20Children%20Who%20Are%20DLLs%20and%20Families.pdf>. This toolkit provides an extensive list of resources on evidence-based practices, tools, and strategies to support young dual language learners and their families.
- ◆ *State Policies for Supporting Family, Friend, & Neighbor Care* (2009). BUILD Initiative Policy Brief, Richard Chase, Wilder Research, available at http://www.familyfriendandneighbor.org/pdf/BUILD_FFN_and_Systems.pdf. This brief describes the process that Minnesota used to expand community services for family, friend, and neighbor

caregivers to promote young children's healthy development. The initial six grantees are located throughout the state and serve varied cultural groups, including Native American and immigrant caregivers.

- ◆ *Family Resource Information, Education and Network Development Services (FRIENDS)* online learning center offers free distance learning modules available at <https://friendsnrcelearning.remote-learner.net/>. A variety of online courses are available, including, implementation science, logic models, and continuous quality improvement

Appendix E – Sample Job Description

All Our Kin Early Childhood Educational Consultant Job Description

All Our Kin, Inc., a nationally-recognized, Connecticut-based nonprofit organization that trains, supports, and sustains community child care providers to ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life, seeks an Early Childhood Educational Consultant to provide mentoring, coaching, training, technical assistance and support to family child care providers. The Educational Consultant is supervised by the Network Director.

We are searching for an enthusiastic team player who wants to make an impact and is excited about being a part of an effective, growing and dynamic non-profit organization. We offer competitive salary and benefits, a flexible schedule, and the opportunity to work with a team of skilled and motivated professionals.

Responsibilities of the Early Childhood Educational Consultant include:

- ◆ Offering professional development to help providers improve the quality of their care.
- ◆ Visiting providers at home to conduct assessments and offer one-on-one program support, such as curriculum planning, model lessons, mentoring, coaching, guided practice and feedback, goal setting, and other support as needed.
- ◆ Problem-solving and collaborating with providers to design responsive strategies
- ◆ Linking providers to community resources and supports
- ◆ Designing and facilitating trainings
- ◆ Responding to provider inquiries or requests over email or phone.
- ◆ Organizing and attending evening monthly meetings and occasional weekend events.
- ◆ Keeping detailed records of all interactions with providers.
- ◆ Using the Salesforce database and Microsoft Word to record and track data.
- ◆ Collaborating with the Stamford/Norwalk Network Director and the All Our Kin staff.

Ideal candidates will:

- ◆ Be bilingual in Spanish and English
- ◆ Love children and understand principles of early childhood best practice.
- ◆ Have an academic background in and experience teaching early childhood education.
- ◆ Have extensive experience mentoring teachers and understand adult development.
- ◆ Be committed to the goal of making high-quality early care and education available to all children.
- ◆ Value an asset-based approach to change and understand that the process is lengthy and requires sensitivity, flexibility, respect and commitment.
- ◆ Value the collaborative, reflective, and reciprocal nature of consultation.

- ◆ Value diversity and demonstrate cultural and linguistic competency.
- ◆ Understand and respect the provider's knowledge about his/her own and his/her children's experiences.
- ◆ Believe in the All Our Kin mission and model.
- ◆ Approach provider development with a growth mindset and believe all providers can improve, whatever their starting point.
- ◆ Use reflective practice strategies and skills.
- ◆ Be extremely organized.
- ◆ Be flexible.
- ◆ Be creative problem solvers.
- ◆ Have a keen eye for detail and the ability to multitask.
- ◆ Be proficient in Excel and Microsoft Word.
- ◆ Possess excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- ◆ Have experience working in urban communities.
- ◆ Have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree.
- ◆ Spanish speakers encouraged to apply.

All Our Kin is an equal opportunity employer and recognizes that diversity and opportunity are fundamental to children's lives and to our work. For more information, visit our website at www.allourkin.org.

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The National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (ECQA Center) supports State and community leaders and their partners in the planning and implementation of rigorous approaches to quality in all early care and education settings for children from birth to school age. The ECQA Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

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