



Early Childhood Quality and Systems Development

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The BUILD Initiative
May 2013

Build
Strong Foundations For
Our Youngest Children

Goals for Today:

- Explore what early childhood (EC) quality is, and how states are pursuing it
- Focus on QRIS as a key lever for quality improvement and systems change
- Think together about challenges and key policy questions for legislators



The BUILD Initiative

- Supports state leaders in building early childhood systems that span ECE, health, mental health, family support and special needs
- Funds 10 states directly and dozens more through our publications, TA, conferences and partnerships
- Sponsor of the QRIS National Learning Network (www.QRISNetwork.org)



State Early Childhood Development System

Comprehensive health services that meet children's vision, hearing, nutrition, behavioral, and oral health as well as medical health needs.

Early care and education opportunities in nurturing environments where children can learn what they need to succeed in school and life.

Early Learning

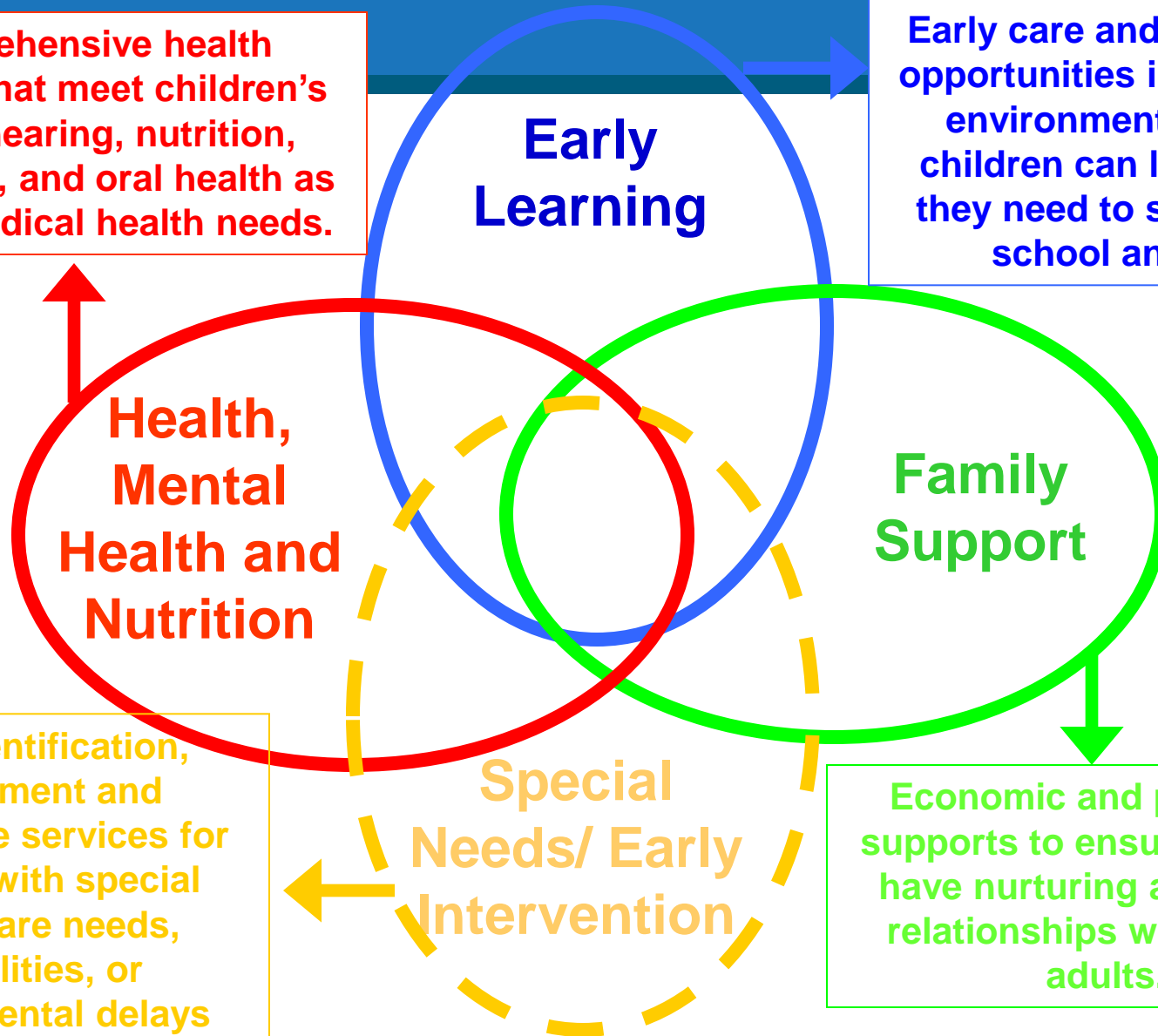
Health, Mental Health and Nutrition

Family Support

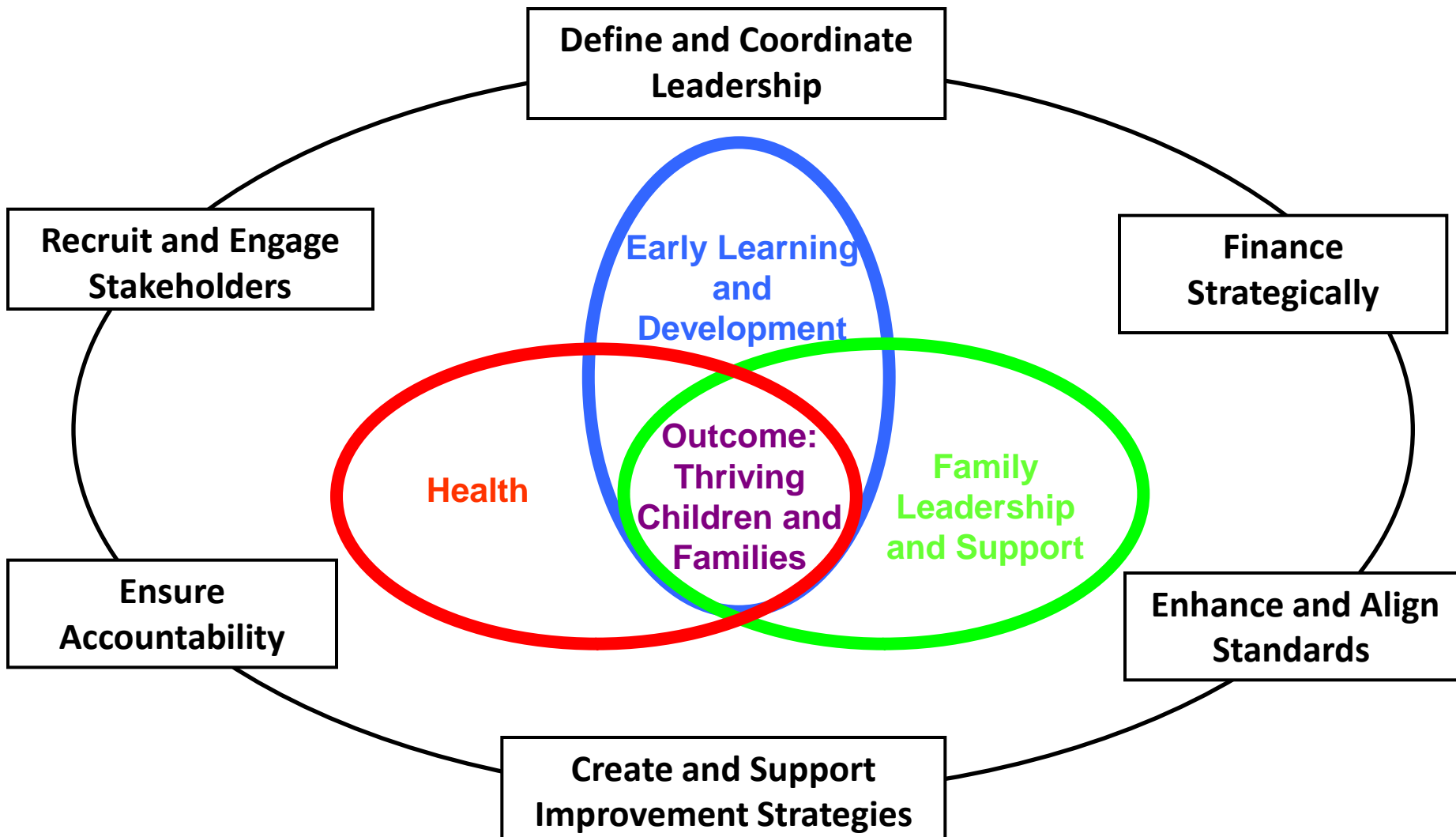
Early identification, assessment and appropriate services for children with special health care needs, disabilities, or developmental delays

Special Needs/ Early Intervention

Economic and parenting supports to ensure children have nurturing and stable relationships with caring adults.



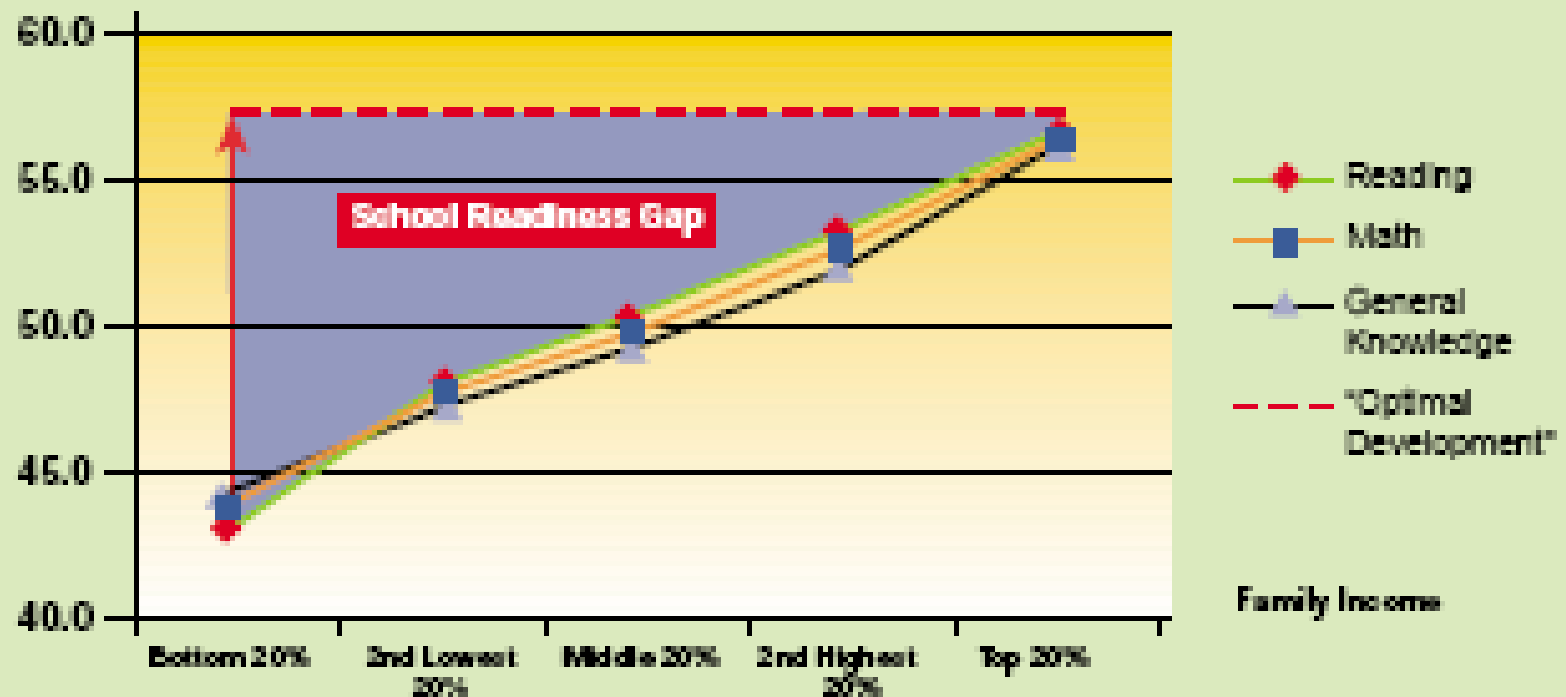
Core Functions of a Comprehensive Early Childhood System



School Readiness Gap

Figure 2. Academic Abilities of Entering Kindergarteners by Family Income

Academic Ability Scores



Source: NCES

The Challenge

- Inequitable access to quality
- Uneven program quality
- Fragmented EC system
 - Multiple infrastructures, standards and monitoring
 - Inadequate funding
 - Hard for families to navigate



Principal Elements of Quality

- Highly skilled providers
- Age-appropriate curricula and stimulating materials in a safe physical setting
- A language-rich environment
- Warm, responsive interactions
- High and consistent levels of child participation
- Small class sizes; high adult-to-child ratios

**-Center on the Developing Child
Harvard University**

QRIS as a Systemic Solution

- Voluntary ratings and QI investments
- Meaningful PD and support for providers
- Accountability and transparency
- Informed parents and consumers
- Child care, Pre-K, Head Start, Family CC
- Aligned funding to improve and sustain quality

Elements of QRIS

- Program and teacher standards
- Monitoring/quality assurance
- Financial incentives
- Quality improvement supports
- Parent/consumer education



Quality Improvement Supports

- Financial incentives
- Coaching and mentoring
- Environmental quality training & supports
- Meaningful professional development

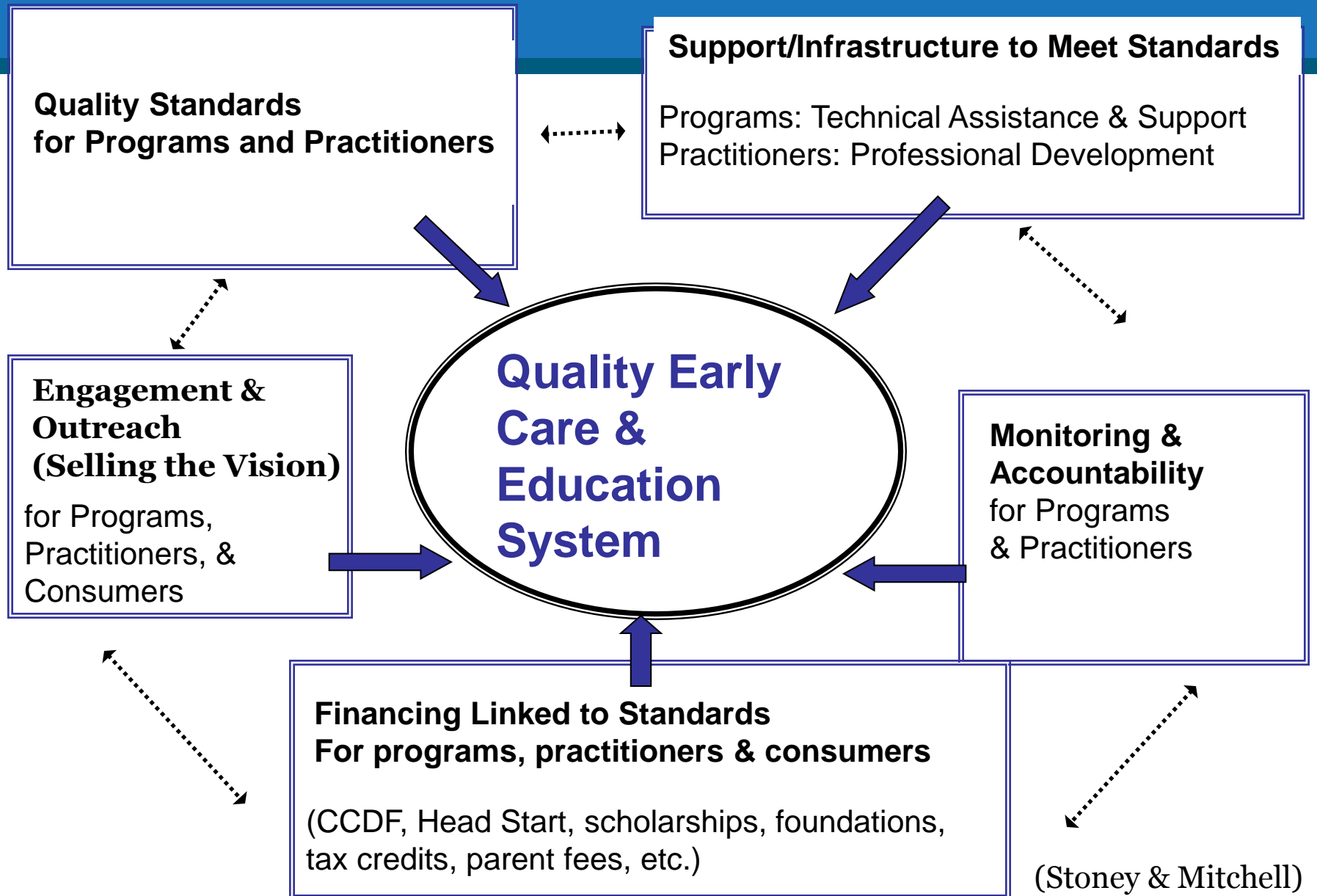


QRIS and Systems Change

- Old thinking: QRIS as stand-alone quality initiative for “child care”
- New thinking: framework for a coordinated, accountable ECE system



A Standards-Based ECE System Design



QRIS Can Serve

- As a **Yardstick**: enables public and private funders to assess the effectiveness of their investments in ECE programs
- As a **QI Driver**: shows states where gaps in quality exist and what types of resources are needed to improve quality
- As a **Policy Tool**: to align different ECE standards and the funding and professional development systems that support them

(adapted from Mitchell, 2005)



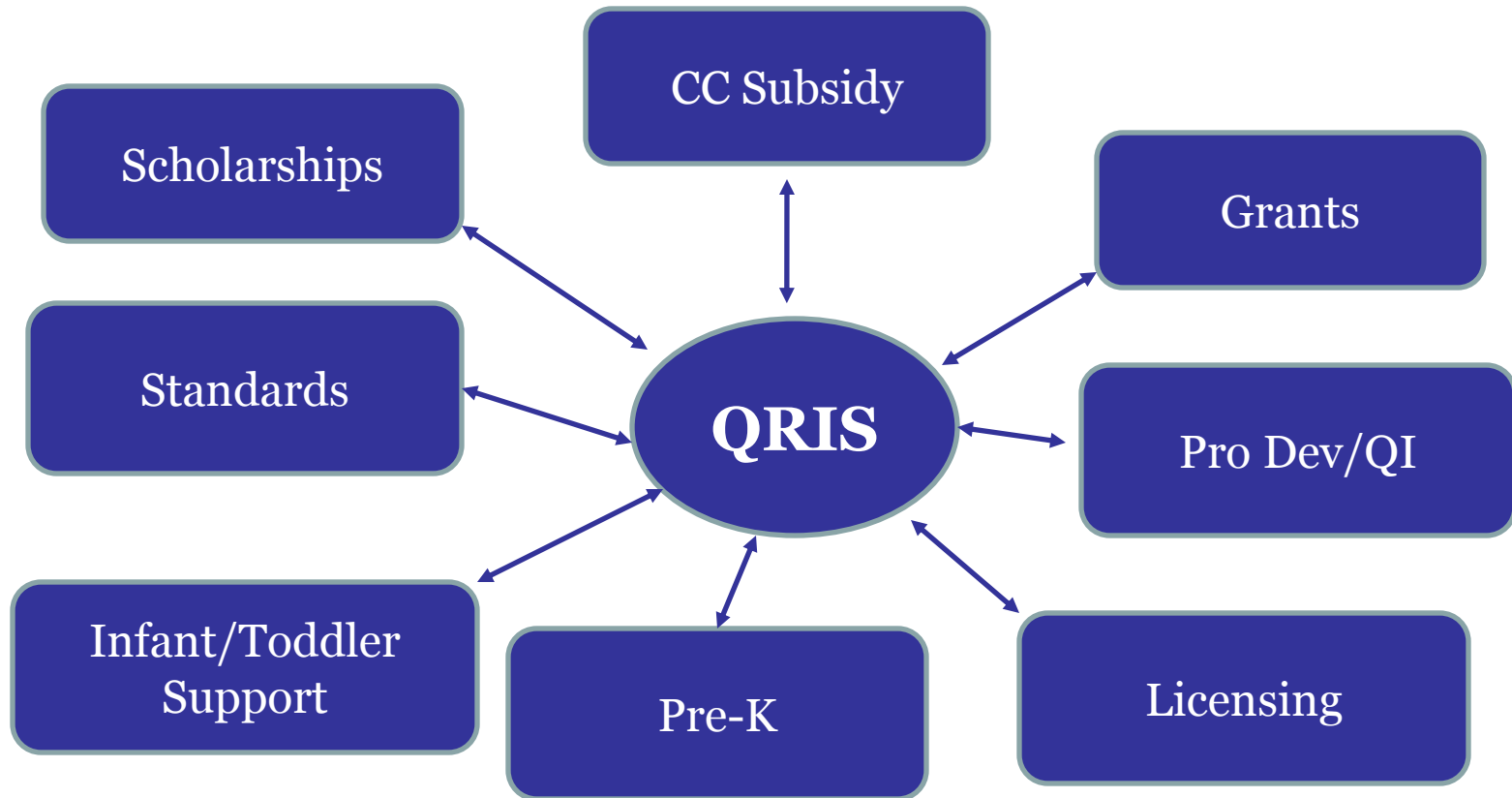
QRIS Opens Doors to...



- More money for PD and QI support as demand for help increases
- Making better use of existing dollars
- Aligning PD, early learning standards and even higher ed policies to QRIS
- Accountability drives public support for EC investment
- Alignment with K-12 system



Aligning System Components



What We've Seen So Far

- Overall quality has gone up
- Progress on system alignment
- Implementation challenges: training, personnel, cost of delivery
- Measurement limitations: cost, reliability
- Gradual shift from “R” to “I”

Key Questions for Legislators

- Is your state using QRIS as a systems change strategy, or simply as a tool for quality improvement?
- Who is at the QRIS leadership table? What values are driving the process?
- Cultural competence is often a weak spot. Do you know how well your EC system is serving diverse populations?
- Local capacity to implement is key to success. Do you have enough well-trained people? High-functioning organizations?



Key Questions for Legislators

- Do you have adequate QI resources? If not, do your expectations match your money?
- Does your evaluation strategy fit your goals for QRIS?
- Empowering parents as consumers – changing the market – takes time and money. How will you build and sustain support for the long-term shift to quality?

Make the most of the assets you have



QRIS National Learning Network

For more information, visit

www.qrisnetwork.org

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