Early Achievers Technical Assistance Framework

Updated Winter 2014

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Contents

Our Mission

To support families and caregivers, shape policy, and build communities that promote the learning and development of children and youth throughout Washington State through a strong statewide network of local child care resource and referral programs.

Our Vision is that:

- Children receive quality care;
- All parents have access to affordable, quality child care for all children;
- Child care providers are professionals who are well trained and earn a living-wage;
- Child care providers receive the support of parents, employers and the local community in order to provide consistent, high quality and developmentally appropriate care for children;
- Local communities address needs for child care by involving child care resource & referrals, parents, child care providers, employers, and local and state agencies, and private organizations providing services to families.

Our History

Technical Assistance has been a core part of CCR&R services in Washington State and nationally for many years. Through our technical assistance services we are able to establish partnerships with child care providers and cultivate powerful collaborations while developing skills and professional development opportunities for a wide range of stakeholders. Our technical assistance services are traditionally broad-based, ranging from assistance in building strong business practices to addressing the varied needs of individual children. Early Achievers provides a welcome framework for quality, inspiring focused, measurable improvements in motivated providers who want the best for the children in their care.

In 2012, Child Care Aware of Washington consolidated from 11 to 7 regions statewide. This realignment streamlined the services delivered in all areas of the state. The change has allowed all regional CCA of WA agencies the ability to develop and deliver technical assistance services that meet a uniform standard of quality. During the growth period resulting from the launch of Early Achievers our system is continuing to evolve and adapt to ensure that regional work is reflective of our uniform set of foundational practices and also relevant to the unique populations and communities throughout our state.

Our current goal is to create a unified system of relationship-based professional development practices that is responsive to child care provider skill-building needs, is culturally relevant, and that ultimately increases child care quality in each CCA region of Washington State.

Our Technical Assistance Philosophy

Relationship-based professional development is delivered by coaches, consultants and mentors; and is often referred to as technical assistance. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRA) define technical assistance or TA as, "the provision of targeted and customized supports by a professional with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of services by recipients." (Agencies, 2011)

Technical assistance (TA) is an important element of any early learning professional development system. NAEYC and NACCRRA demonstrate the value of Technical assistance in the following way:

Professional Development

Education   Training

Technical Assistance
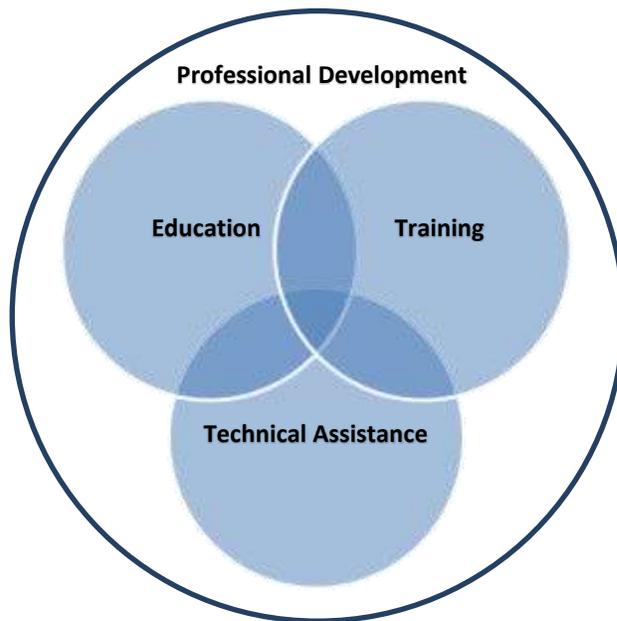
Technical assistance continues to be a key element of the regional work of the CCA of WA system. This relationship-based professional development intervention supports child care providers as they recognize quality improvement needs. It helps them translate skills and knowledge into practice and guides them to access ongoing resources within their communities to sustain quality practices. Our efforts make the most impact when they are structured and intentional, and based on an initial assessment guided by providers' own understanding of their needs.

Guiding Principles

> Guiding Principles for Child Care Aware of Washington Technical Assistance
>
> ❖ Technical assistance addresses the needs of adult learners in a way that inspires meaningful change.
>
> ❖ Technical assistance assumes that child care providers are capable and competent.
>
> ❖ Technical assistance is culturally and relationally responsive to providers and to the children in their care.

Our guiding principles are grounded in best practices for adult education and quality early learning experiences. We hold to the belief that all child care and early learning providers are capable and competent beings. We know that change occurs in *context* and understand the importance of being relationally responsive. We recognize that each individual in a relationship has her/his own culture and approach, so we strive to be reflective and culturally competent.

Our TA Specialists recognize child care providers as **adult learners.** Starting with that in mind, TA Specialists use multiple approaches to build on the knowledge and experience of providers and helps them make steps or connections that are relevant to their unique situations. Adults are motivated to learn when they have identified a need, and understanding this prompts TA Specialists to guide providers through a discovery process and then helps them design a relevant, application based plan of action.

Providers as Adult Learners- specific TA tools and approaches:

- Early Achievers Participation Plan[1]
- Milestone check-in's
- Multiple modalities, such as videos or visual aids, articles, connections within the community—and provided on-site, in groups or by phone and email.

Our TA Specialists recognize **providers are capable and competent** individuals who need encouragement and accountability instead of the 'right' answer. TA Specialists work to strike a balance between providing new information and fostering self-discovery with their assistance. Some providers may already know the answer to their questions or have the ability to find it, but may be hesitant to take the first step. TA Specialists prompt and encourage them to investigate resources or solutions before jumping in with an answer. TA Specialists are confident in providers' skills as researchers and critical thinkers; they offer guiding questions and encourage providers to use the tools they have or connect them to new tools and resources. They want providers to be empowered to look for answers.

Providers are Capable and Competent- Specific TA tools and approaches:

- Appreciative inquiry
- Quality Standards Questionnaire[2]
- Powerful questions[3]
- Active listening
- Action planning tool

Our Technical Assistance services are **culturally and relationally responsive**. TA Specialists understand that each individual has their own culture, including a unique set of experiences that informs their view of the world around them. It is important to keep this in mind as relationships develop. TA Specialists view the world through multiple lenses and support the co-creation of knowledge based on mutual ideas and understandings that are reflective of the provider's culture and values as well as those of the children in their care. TA Specialists strive to have materials and resources reflective of the provider's primary language. TA Specialists partner with providers to establish norms for their TA relationship and mutually agree upon how the TA relationship will work—including things like how providers prefer to receive feedback, and their communication preferences (phone, email or texting). TA Specialists work to be relationally responsive, or in tune with provider needs, so they can use the most effective approaches for the individuals on their caseloads. This means knowing how and when to push, and when to step back and allow the provider the space to make changes.

Early Achievers TA is culturally and relationally responsive- specific TA tools and approaches:

- TA provided in home language
- Translated and/or adapted materials
- Intentional relationship building from the first visit
- Caseload approach

Early Achievers Technical Assistance (updated spring 2013)

CCA of WA seized the roll-out of Early Achievers as an opportunity to make strategic alignments in regional services. This updated model incorporates technical assistance to child care providers focused on successfully completing Level 2 activities, and preparing for a facility rating and ongoing quality improvement work with a coach. We stress the importance of consistent delivery by developing foundational tools to support field work and specific outcomes to measure success. Additionally, we recognize the need to have customized approaches to TA delivery in order to support a continuum of child care providers on their paths of quality improvement.

Over the past year, we learned more about the coaching model and saw natural alignment with our technical assistance processes. In response, we have modified our TA Framework to support a smooth transition from TA in Level 2 to coaching in Level 3 and beyond. For example, to help participants prepare for rating, TA Specialists guide them through reflection and goal setting based on self-assessment information; these practices set the stage for later coaching work when providers will set quality improvement goals based on data from their Early Achievers evaluation. TA Specialists help providers understand that quality improvement is a process that takes time and that a rating is the not a defining moment, but a new phase of discovery where they will get concrete information about their program strengths and have a coach guide them through continued quality improvement.

Our experiences in the formative months of Early Achievers implementation showed there was a need for a more *customized* model of TA that still offers a foundationally consistent level of services. Data from the first 9 months of services illustrated that TA in the first 30 days of enrollment is heavily focused on the logistical elements of participating in Early Achievers. Many participants need help with navigating MERIT and with accessing and understanding the components of the Level 2 application. We have also seen an increase in regions offering group TA, which helps providers make connections and develop their own learning communities creating sustainable quality practices. Understanding these trends helps us to develop a TA framework with approaches and options that will leverage opportunities and resources.

In light of our experience, we have updated our TA approach to include considerations for providers moving through Early Achievers at multiple speeds. This model separates TA into three distinct phases: Outreach/Orientation, Level 2 TA, and Rating Readiness Consultation. The first two phases focus on the foundations of Early Achievers and continuous quality improvement; followed by Rating Readiness Consultation where the focus is on the ERS and CLASS components of the Quality Standards as well as finalizing the File of Supporting Materials and Rating Readiness Tool.

The first two phases of technical assistance focus on the primary contact of participating child care facilities. TA Specialists work directly with Family Child Care Owners and Child Care Center

Directors to help them develop a plan to complete Level 2 activities and prepare for a quality rating.   As stated in the Urban Institute report *Understanding Quality in Context* (2010), it is essential to begin quality improvement work with the leader of an organization, who invariably sets the tone for the quality of their program. Helping organizational leaders understand the value of Early Achievers relative to their program is critical to successful and sustainable changes.

During the rating readiness phase of assistance a consultant works with the program's leadership and a portion of the teaching staff, yet they design and implement a consultation plan to help all staff benefit from consultation services. The consultant and the owner or director partner to develop a goal to prepare the evidence of current practices that will become their program's File of Supporting Materials. When organizational leaders and staff come together around a common goal they are more likely to achieve success.

Early Achievers TA Outcomes
We have established three key outcomes for Early Achievers Technical Assistance.

1. Providers will ***understand*** Early Achievers program requirements, quality standards, and the process to successfully complete Level 2 activities.
2. Providers will ***apply*** new knowledge gained from Self-Assessments, the Level 2 Professional Training Series, and personal reflections by ***developing*** action plans that prepare them to receive a facility rating.
3. Providers will begin to ***value and internalize*** the concept of continuous quality improvement, laying the groundwork for deeper goal-setting through coaching in Levels 3-5.

The Journey to Rating Readiness: a Change Model
In order to achieve our goals and outcomes in Early Achievers, we have adopted a new change model. A provider's journey in Early Achievers, from registration to rating to coaching, is closely aligned with the change model of **Appreciative Inquiry (AI)** (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008)**.** Appreciative Inquiry follows a 4-D process: discovery, dream, design and destiny. Upon enrollment in Early Achievers, a provider begins a **discovery** process where they learn how the quality standards complement their facility's strengths. Then through training, self-assessment and reflection, they begin to **dream** about what the future holds for their child care practice and begin to see how things may be able to change. Using the results from self-assessments and additional resources, they begin to **design** their future, setting goals for changes and determining just how they want their program to be. This phase will take them through to the end goal of rating readiness. Once providers are rated and begin coaching, they will begin to realize their **destiny** of continuous quality improvement.

Appreciative Inquiry:
Laying the foundation for continuous quality improvement

Destiny

Design

Dream

Discovery

Pre-Enrollment & Outreach
- Orientation
- Operating Guidelines
- Participation Agreement
- **APPROACHES: group based communications like** newsletters and emails; tech support sessions; Orientations and community meetings,; one on one TA to support registration challenges
- **TOOLS:** Orientation, Operating Guidelines; participation agreement, EA videos, EA handouts, TA brochure

Level 2
- Understand Quality Standards
- Self-Assessment
- Training and Implementation
- **APPROACHES:** Quality Standards Interview ; AI; group TA; visioning; community connections
- **TOOLS**: QS Questionnaire tool; Level 2 training follow-up documents, Reflective practice resources and protocols; articles about self-assessment process; ERS reflections tools; Provider Child Interactions Check; Rating Readiness Tool; Rating Readiness Consultation Pre-Assessment

Rating Readiness Consultation
- Goals and action plans based on Self-Assessment results
- Focused TA and resources around CLASS and ERS
- **APPROACHES:** one-on-one TA; continued group TA reflective practice or cohort connections
- **TOOLS:** RR Consultation Plan, ERS Reflection results; continued used of Provider Child Interactions Check; WaKIDS Alignment Tool; ELG Curricular Alignment Tool; Rating Readiness Tool; Critical Friend Protocol

Coaching
- Implementing change
- Begin a cycle of ongoing change and growth that leads to continued quality improvement

Discovery TA Specialists help Directors and Family Child Care Owners understand that quality improvement is a journey. They help them discover connections between their own views on quality and the Early Achievers quality standards.

Dream During Level 2, as Early Achievers participants complete their Professional Training Series and their self-assessments, TA Specialists encourage them to set a vision for the future—Level 2 or Level 3 and above. It is during this time that directors and owners begin to see how their programs can change, and it is critical for TA Specialists to help them develop an aggressive but achievable plan to reach their goals. Within this partnership TA specialists help participants reflect on their practice and take steps to build on their strengths and identify areas for growth, bringing their dreams closer to reality.

Design After self-assessment, RR Consultants guide participants through a rating readiness period, where they continue to build on their strengths, improve their practice, and focus on the particular areas most heavily examined in the rating process; the environment and interactions. During this period, primary contacts will complete the Rating Readiness Tool by assembling their *File of Supporting Materials* and documenting the locations of evidence that demonstrates their current practices. RR Consultants will play the role of a critical friend during this process to encourage participants to be thorough and consistent.

Destiny By the end of this pre-rating period, TA Specialists and RR Consultants will have facilitated the successful completion of the 3 key outcomes for Early Achievers Technical Assistance. Participants will *understand* Early Achievers program requirements, quality standards, and they will have successfully completed Level 2 activities. They will have implemented action plans that put knowledge into practice and made changes to help them be ready for rating. And finally, participants will be ready for deeper goal setting with coaches because they have started to internalize the concept of continuous quality improvement.

What does AI look like in practice?
The TA Toolkit contains a series of Appreciative Inquiry interviews that address each section of the Early Achievers Quality Standards. These interview tools will help TA Specialists draw information from participants about what their best has been and could be in that area. For example, thinking about the child care environment, a TA Specialist could ask the participant the following questions.

ENVIRONMENT
1. Tell me about a time when you found yourself describing your child care environment as a great place to play and learn.
    a. What did you say?
    b. When you/teachers spend time in those spaces, where do you/they go?
    c. Where do the children go?

      d.   What do you like most about each space?
2. What are three things you would wish for to make this space even better?
3. Imagine that your wishes are fulfilled—what then would you say is the most distinguishing or best feature of your environment?

If the participant does not have a vision for their environment, the TA Specialist will suggest some steps to learn more about the endless possibilities in child care spaces. They may suggest books with pictures of environments, websites with great visuals, or child care programs within the community the participant can visit for inspiration. The TA Specialist may also connect the participant to a reflective practice group on environments. Many of these additional resources are in our TA Toolkit and others are elements specific to the particular CCA of WA region.

The responses to the Appreciative Inquiry interviews and ERS and Quality Standards self-assessments helps the participants and TA Specialists develop goals and design strategies to reach them. The purpose of setting goals and action steps is to help facilities prepare for a rating. All participants will have an opportunity to discover and appreciate their strengths as well as to design changes to current practices to help them align with the Early Achievers Quality Standards. Participants will go about this process at varying speeds depending on their current level of quality and their capacity to implement changes.

Planning for Rating Readiness: a tiered TA Framework
We have established a **tiered technical assistance framework**. Our objective with this tiered framework is to expedite movement and progress through the initial phase of Level 2 in an efficient and effective manner.

Tiered TA recognizes that providers enter into the voluntary system with variable levels of quality *and* readiness to be prepared for a rating. Some providers will take a greater amount of time and/or resources than others to be ready for rating. Other providers may have ambitious plans to be rated earlier, but may require more supportive resources in a shorter period of time. In order to triage appropriately, it is important to collect general information about participants at the beginning of the TA relationship, including their projected timeline and their own assessment of their strengths and needs as related to the quality standards. A baseline collection of information from participants also helps regional offices allocate resources properly, maintain balanced caseloads, establish targets to move through the phases of TA, and efficiently facilitate progress to rating and ultimately coaching.

The following is an illustration of the EA participant population placed in the tiered framework. This table includes time estimations of the milestones that should be completed in order to achieve a given timeline.

Projected Timelines for Activities Leading up to Rating
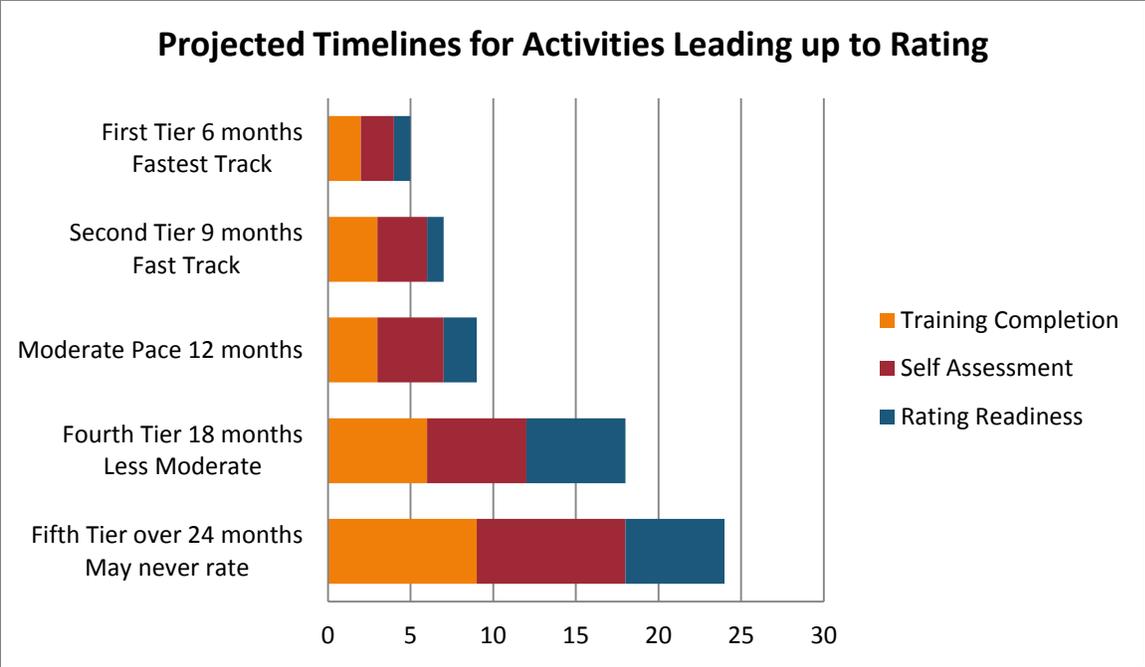
Time is just one factor

Our tiered framework considers time and available resources for technical assistance and rating readiness consultation. The model requires strategic dosage in order to maximize impact and participant progress. The chart above is an example of projected timelines for Level 2 and rating readiness activities.

We developed this model considering the following assumptions:
- Providers enter Early Achievers with variable levels of quality and capacity to make changes.
- We must prioritize limited resources to help participants successfully implement those changes.

These assumptions have led to this framework, which combines various delivery methods in order to make the biggest impact for the participants and the most efficient use of our resources. Participants will have access to a combination of one-on-one, group and distance TA. TA Specialists and providers will develop a plan to make the most of the limited one on one time. Each participant, no matter the tier, is entitled to an unlimited quantity of group TA such as reflective practice groups, and distance TA such as phone and email contact. The difference among the tiers is how and when those resources are deployed.

First Tier: Registration to Applying for Rating in 6 months

Participants in this first tier are both eager and able to quickly move through Level 2. The providers in this group are ready to benefit and possess certain qualities or assets that poise them to be more prepared for the on-site evaluation. The day-to-day practices of providers in this group are already aligned to the EA Quality Standards and their staff is engaged and eager to go through the evaluation process to demonstrate their competence and quality. .

Programs that have the ability to complete Level 2 and the rating readiness process in a 6 month time frame likely have characteristics such as:

- The facility achieved national accreditation within the past 12 months.
- Eligible Head Start or ECEAP programs
- Most program practices naturally align with the Quality Standards
- Program has a system in place to document evidence of quality practices
- The facility has a strong curriculum in place
- Staff has experience with ERS or CLASS
- Staff completed the online training before registering for EA
- The facility has a relatively stable workforce. Staff have already completed education verification process and are placed on the Career Lattice
- Director or owner is willing to commit substantial time outside of their program hours to ready their program for a rating

Second Tier: Registration to Applying for Rating in 9 months

This tier is made up of the participants who are eager and able to quickly move through Level 2. This group is comprised of providers who are ready to benefit and possess certain qualities or assets that poise them to be more prepared for the on-site evaluation. Program policies, procedures and practices already align with the EA Quality Standards and teachers are familiar with the concept of continuous quality improvement. Staff in these programs are ready to take on new challenges and are actively engaged in EA.

Programs that have the ability to complete Level 2 and the rating readiness process in a 9 month time frame may have characteristics such as:

- The facility is nationally accredited.
- Military Certified
- Eligible Head Start or ECEAP programs
- Many program practices naturally align with the Quality Standards
- The facility has a strong curriculum in place
- Staff has experience with ERS or CLASS

- The facility has a relatively stable workforce. Staff have already completed education verification process and are placed on the Career Lattice
- The director or owner is willing to commit substantial time outside of their program hours to ready their program for a rating

Third Tier: 12 months

This tier is also made up of the participants who are eager and able to quickly move through Level 2. A few providers in this group may not have all the pieces in place to race toward rating, but they have a vested interest and stamina for the changes that must be made in the short window of time. Other providers in this group have demonstrated alignment to the quality standards but need more time to get staff onboard with the evaluation process. This group is open to learning about the ERS and CLASS and will benefit from a detailed introduction to both tools and opportunities to demonstrate their skills prior to the evaluation.

Programs that have the ability to complete Level 2 and the rating readiness process in a 12 month time frame may have characteristics such as:
- The facility has a strong curriculum in place.
- Facility has documentation of quality practices that relate to some of the EA Quality Standards
- Staff are open to learning more about Early Achievers, the ERS and CLASS
- The facility has a relatively stable workforce. The staff started the education verification process prior to registration.
- The director or owner is willing to commit extra time outside of their program hours to ready their program for a rating.

Fourth Tier: 18 months

This tier in our model is made up of providers who want to keep a moderate pace. This group may need some added attention before the on-site evaluation. They likely have processes in place that need some minor adjustment in order to align with Early Achievers. For example, they may have policies in place that are not consistently reflected in their current practices. Providers in this group will benefit from additional connections in the community and a detailed introduction to ERS and CLASS and opportunities to try new approaches and practice their skills before the evaluation.

Programs that have the ability to complete Level 2 and the rating readiness process in an 18 month time frame may have characteristics such as:
- The facility has elements of a curriculum in place.
- The facility staff has not started the education verification process upon registration.
- Staff have little prior knowledge of the ERS and CLASS

- The director or owner has limited extra time outside of their program hours to ready their program for a rating.
- Program has quality practices in place but is a large center and needs to prepare many classrooms and staff for the evaluation process

Fifth Tier: More than 24 months

Participants in this group who aspire to have a rating likely joined Early Achievers with the intent to move quickly, and then discover there are some practices that need additional attention before the on-site evaluation. This group may also include newly licensed programs that must attain their full license and complete all rating readiness activities prior to requesting a rating. Also, particularly large programs that have many staff to bring on board with the Quality Standards or programs with limited computer resources may take more than 24 months to request a rating. There are also cases when providers have life event that alter their participation plans. Participants who need materials and support in a language that is not readily available may also need more than 24 months to prepare for a rating. Participants in this tier will benefit from an in depth exploration of ERS and CLASS and opportunities to develop new approaches and demonstrate them prior to evaluation.

Programs that have the ability to complete Level 2 and the rating readiness process in more than 24 month time frame may have characteristics such as:
- The facility has no curriculum in place.
- The primary and secondary contacts have limited technology skills or limited access to technology
- The facility struggles with staff turnover.
- The facility staff has not started the education verification process upon registration.
- Materials are not available in the participant's primary language.
- The facility has had licensing issues, or enters EA with an initial license.
- There has been a change in the director.
- The director or owner has limited extra time outside of their program hours to ready their program for a rating.

Child Care Aware of WA Responses to the Tiered Approach

Recognizing these differences in providers within this tiered model is our internal method to assess participants and then strategically deploy our limited technical assistance resources and supports in order to make the biggest impact. We must provide tools and resources like the Quality Standards Questionnaire and Appreciative Inquiry Interviews to help TA Specialists triage incoming participants and set the course for quality improvement. They must be able to maintain a delicate balance in order to move facilities from registration to rating without losing

them along the way. TA Specialists must be able to recognize teachable moments and capitalize on them. This means they need to empower Center Directors and Family Child Care Owners to set a target date for rating and use TA to challenge them to meet or exceed this goal.

Technical Assistance Phases

Our strategy is to distinguish technical assistance as occurring in three distinct phases: Outreach/Orientation, Level 2, and Rating Readiness. These three phases require TA staff to use different lenses to approach the work with Early Achievers. This distinction allows us to have a laser beam focus on the activity at hand and help participants set specific goals to move them from one phase to the next. This also helps Center Directors and Family Child Care Owners recognize their forward progress in Early Achievers and motivates them to continue their quality improvement efforts.

These three phases align closely with the first three stages of Appreciative Inquiry; discovery, dream, and design. During *Outreach & Orientation TA* and continuing into the beginning of *Level 2 TA,* participants *discover* connections between current child care practice and the Early Achievers Quality Standards. During *Level 2 TA,* as participants complete their classes and self-assessments they begin to *dream* about what their future could be. Then as they move into *Rating Readiness Consultation*, they begin to *design* new approaches to improve their practices and to prepare for a rating. Each phase of TA and the change model build a foundation for coaching and deeper goal setting and quality improvement work.

Outreach and Orientation TA—Discovering Opportunity

As the entry point of Early Achievers, outreach is focused on encouraging participation, leading Orientations, and guiding Early Achiever participants through the Operating Guidelines and Participation Agreement. This level of TA focuses on the logistical elements of Early Achievers and is mostly delivered in a group format. Once the Center Director or Family Child Care Owner has an operational understanding of Early Achievers and begins to discover how their program fits and can benefit from participation, they are ready start their Level 2 Application and begin working on Level 2 activities.

Main TA modalities:
- Group based regular communications(i.e., e-mails, newsletters, bulletins,)
- Community events—TA Services Brochure[4]
- Group technology sessions
- Group orientations
- Some individual support to address eligibility issues and other barriers to enrollment

Level 2 TA—Discovering Strengths and Daring to Dream

Level 2 TA is all about helping participants discover their facility's strengths as they relate to the Early Achievers Quality Standards. Level 2 TA begins by helping providers identify their strengths through Appreciative Inquiry and powerful questions. Together, TA Specialists and participants develop a vision for the future and create action plans to help participants focus their energy on particular areas of the quality standards that already resonate with their values and practices. In addition to the self-discovery, the Center Director or Family Child Care Owner completes the Professional Training Series, the facility profile and the ERS and Quality Standards self-assessments all of which deepen their understanding of their facility's strengths and plant seeds for future development.

TA Specialists connect participants to the Level 2 Professional Training Series and once they are complete, they guide them to implement newly learned skills and concepts gained in the classes. When Center Directors or Family Child Care Owners are ready to complete their self-assessments, their TA specialists help them understand the purpose of self-assessments and different methods to approach a self-assessment. Once complete, TA Specialists will help participants interpret the results and set goals to improve their practice. Together they will develop a course of action that will help participants reach their goals. During this Level 2 period, the participant will also complete their facility profile, by answering the questions in the Level 2 application. TA Specialists are available for both guidance and feedback when addressing the facility profile questions. Once these activities are complete and staff records have been updated in MERIT, the participant is ready to submit their Level 2 application and then focus on Rating Readiness.

Main TA modalities:

- One-on-One TA--focused on the relationship between the provider's current strengths and the Quality Standards, Appreciative Inquiry, and visioning
- Group TA--deepening learning and developing community connections
- Off-site or distance TA—follow-up through phone calls, emails, text messages or other methods

Transition to Rating Readiness Consultation

Once a participant completes Level 2, their TA Specialist will work independently to complete a questionnaire to help determine a provider's level of need for the next phase of support. This questionnaire is known as the Rating Readiness Consultation Pre-Assessment. There are three sections; the first section is an assessment of the provider's strengths and assets, the second section is an assessment of barriers the provider is still facing, and the third section is an assessment of the provider's potential to earn specific Quality Standards points based on their *current* practice. TA

Specialists complete the tool at or near the end of Level 2 and based on the calculation the provider is deemed *highly ready, ready,* or *not currently ready.* These classifications are an indication of the length of time that a RR Consultant will need to spend with the provider prior to rating. A score of "highly ready" means the provider needs very little consultation and will likely apply for a rating in less than three months. A score of "ready" means the provider may need additional support in a variety of areas and may take up to 3 months of consultation in order to be ready for rating. A score of "not currently ready" means the provider may have barriers to address and will likely benefit from group TA or additional training prior to beginning consultation. TA Specialists are encouraged to maintain contact with these providers via phone or email and to prompt them to engage in some self-study prior to updating the RR Consultation Assessment in ETO to see when a provider is ready for consultation. Based on our experience most providers who complete Level 2 will be considered "ready" and therefore will move onto Rating Readiness Consultation right after completing level 2.

Rating Readiness Consultation—designing a new future
When providers begin working on rating readiness, they focus on quality improvement efforts that address specific areas they identified through self-assessment and Appreciative Inquiry. With assistance from their RR Consultant they will take steps to continue implementing changes. Additionally, this period of rating readiness, allows providers and TA Specialists to focus on the elements most heavily weighted in the quality standards—**interactions** and the **environment**. Using multiple tools and resources found in the TA Toolkit, the RR Consultants and participants will strategize ways to improve practices and continue to review and track progress toward rating readiness.

Also during this time, providers will work to complete the *Rating Readiness Tool*, documenting the location of the evidence of certain practices outlined in the quality standards and assembling their *File of Supporting Materials.* RR Consultants offer feedback on the clarity of the documentation and will help providers identify areas that still need to be addressed, and help providers decide whether to either include them or opt out.

Main TA modalities:
- One on one TA focused on the provider's designed action steps for improved practices
- Group TA deepening learning and sustaining community connections
- Off-site or distance TA—follow-up through phone calls, emails, text messages or other methods
- Referrals to community resources

Delivering Technical Assistance
Accountability for All Parties
An important element in successful change and growth is accountability. TA Specialists and RR Consultants furnish each participant with a document that outlines the relationship—much like a memorandum of understanding. The *TA Services and Rating Readiness Services Agreements*[5],

in the TA Toolkit, offer a uniform foundation for recording the structure of individual TA and Rating Readiness relationships. When participants and TA Specialists or RR Consultants begin their journey through each phase of Early Achievers, they review the appropriate agreement and accept the specific terms, then work together to define others, which are unique to their relationship. Some examples of unique characteristics may be defining how TA Specialists will know that a goal has been achieved, or how participants prefer to receive feedback. Ultimately, providers need to make progress through the various steps they planned, and TA specialists and RR Consultants need to follow through with resources and an appropriate level of assistance.

Leveraging the Relationship: One-on-One TA

There are a variety of strategies to delivering technical assistance, and the foundation of each of them is a relationship. All technical assistance begins with the development of trust and rapport. The TA relationship in Level 2 of Early Achievers begins in a one-on-one setting and typically the participant and TA Specialists meet in person. During this initial meeting the TA Specialist gets to know the Center Director or Family Child Care Owner and understand the child care program. Through powerful questions and focused listening, they begin to develop a picture of the facility's strengths and how the participant sees the quality standards fitting within their child care program. Gaining this perspective allows the TA Specialist to facilitate the formulation of a plan for meeting Level 2 requirements. During this session, the director or owner and TA Specialist will begin to complete the Early Achievers Participation Plan, set target dates to complete Level 2 activities and project a date the facility will be ready for rating. The TA Specialist will help the participant set reasonable goals that will keep pace with their targeted timeline. Together, they will discuss strategies and break activities into doable chunks.

Shortening the Commute: Technology Based TA

Technical assistance can be delivered in a variety of methods, including through email, text messages and even web-based applications like Skype or Google+ video chatting. Many Center Directors and Family Child Care Owners find it difficult to get away from their work long for periods of time. Others live a great distance from their local CCA office and find connecting by other means more accommodating. TA Specialists and participants can establish routine methods for communicating, and when possible, TA Specialists encourage participants to consider some of these alternate methods of connecting. They shorten the distance travelled by a TA Specialist thus saving time that can be spent on other TA contacts. Many providers appreciate using email as a means of receiving TA information and resources. This way they can address the information at their convenience and follow-up with the TA specialist after reviewing the materials or completing specific activities.

Building Capacity and Peer Networks: Group TA[6]

In order to maximize TA resources and to foster a sustainable culture of quality improvement, group TA will be incorporated across all Child Care Aware of Washington Regions. Group TA offers providers an opportunity to connect with peers and develop ongoing learning communities. Facilitating these connections within communities will help to sustain improvements to child care practices. The following table offers a menu of group TA options that regional offices will deploy in Early Achievers TA.

Cohort Model

- TA Specialists convene a consistent group of providers who meet regularly and participate in many Early Achievers activities together. One strategy with cohorts is to work with reexisting groups or providers with similar characteristics, such as Military Certified programs.

Reflective Practice Group

- TA Specialists convene providers to discuss and reflect on child care practices. Some groups have set topics that focus on the elements of Early Achievers--for example *interactions*, where they share strategies to increase practices related to CLASS. When there is interest and readiness, TA Specialists will train participants to convene their own groups.

Small group Training Follow-up

- Attendees from a Level 2 class meet with their TA specialist to follow-up on specific elements from that training. This is a one time group gathering.

Conference Calls

- Using a conference line to engage in a conversation with multiple providers

Video Conferencing

- Using Google+, Skype or other video conference service to discuss Early Achievers related materials depending on the technology used between 6 and 9 individuals can chat with each other.

Neighborhood Groups

- Bringing participants from a specific commuity together to facilitate community connections, and deliver periodic TA as a group

Building a Strong Foundation—Quality Assurance for CCA of WA

CCA of WA oversees the regional hiring process and ensures a workforce of Regional Coordinators, Coaches, TA Specialists and RR Consultants that have demonstrated competencies for their roles and responsibilities. CCA of WA provides job description templates to all regional CCA agencies to use in hiring TA Specialists, Coaches, RR Consultants and Regional Coordinators. CCA of WA has placed expectations of rigorous hiring standards along with ongoing professional development for all regional CCA staff. This foundation of quality will support the delivery of comprehensive training and technical assistance services to child care providers.

Orienting New Staff

To help new staff become aware of CCA of WA practices and available resources, CCA of WA developed several tools and approaches including a Technical Assistance Self-Assessment and a Technical Assistance Onboarding Checklist[7]. The Onboarding Checklist outlines the expectations for building a TA Specialist's capacity and the tools to support this rapid growth. The TA Self-Assessment[8] identifies strengths and informs professional development opportunities for individuals, regions or the entire state system. In addition to these individual tools, CCA of WA is also in the process of developing a Technical Assistance Manual[9] that will guide all technical assistance delivery in the CCA of WA system. This manual will include descriptive information regarding particular TA approaches as well as detailed information about specific expectations for TA delivery.

Ongoing Professional Development

Staff training is an ongoing process. CCA of WA provides ongoing training opportunities for regional staff and when opportunities arise or needs present themselves, CCA of WA sponsors face-to-face training. The current menu of ongoing supports includes:

- **Monthly TA/Coach webinars**—these cover a multitude of topics from reflective practice to elements of the quality standards
- **Self-Assessment Tools**—CCA of WA in collaboration with the UW developed an annual Coach Self-Assessment[10] tool. A similar tool is in development for TA Specialists & RCs
- **Communities of Practice**—each CCA region is developing and participating in their own community of practice to help staff reflect on and improve their work.
- **SharePoint**—this web-based tool holds resources that all regions can access, including recordings of past webinars and a *Technical Assistance Toolkit.*
    a. **TA Toolkit[11]**--contains resources for TA Specialists like the Quality Standards webinars and ERS reflection tools. The *TA Toolkit* is a growing resource.

Assuring and Supporting Quality Service Delivery

CCA of WA is responsible for ensuring that quality services are offered across the state in accordance with our statewide services model.

Building Content Expertise[12]

We have identified three key content areas that we want to develop within our system. Developing expertise in each of these areas plays an important role in continued development and maintenance of regional capacity. Increasing expertise in these areas will serve as an important resource to the field. The three areas are:

- CLASS
- Environment Rating Scales
- Quality Standards

To develop CLASS expertise, we have contracted with a CLASS Affiliate trainer to offer Pre-K CLASS reliability training for each region. Additionally, we contracted with TeachStone to provide a Toddler CLASS Affiliate Train the Trainer session so that each region in our system now has an individual who can train their staff in the Toddler CLASS. This is a major step for each region to develop capacity to train their own staff in this content.

To help our system develop expertise in the Environment Rating Scales we have worked with our partner the University of Washington to offer reliability training for staff in each CCA of WA region. Additionally, in partnership with University of Washington we are in the process of developing a foundational training on ERS that will help field staff understand each ERS tool, what it measures, the challenges that many providers face and how to teach providers about the ERS. Getting this training to our regional field staff is a step toward proficiency in the ERS measures.

We continually work with our partners to increase field staff capacity in understanding and interpreting the Early Achievers Quality Standards through webinars, feedback and the implementation of an Early Achievers email inbox for questions from the field related to the Quality Standards. Questions are answered directly to the individual that asked and then posted on SharePoint so everyone can benefit from the information.

Ongoing QA support of services and regional oversight

We also have regular check points to reflect on service delivery, to communicate changes, and to discuss fidelity of Early Achievers services through:

- Monthly face-to face meetings for Regional Coordinators
- Monthly Regional Coordinator Calls

- Monthly calls and regular in-person meetings with the Technical Assistance Workgroup[13]; members from all regions; inform work at state level

Regional QA

An assessment of services is carried out at the regional level for quality assurance purposes:

- Observation[14]—the TA supervisor or a peer will shadow a TA Specialist on a visit and offer focused feedback using tools that are aligned with Early Achievers TA goals, and processes outlined by NACCRRA Best Practices (NQA).
- Customer Feedback--Regions offer providers opportunities to provide feedback through surveys at particular milestones of the TA relationship. Providers also always have the opportunity to call the TA supervisor to share feedback.
- Regional implementation of agency communities of practice. We see COP's as serving a quality assurance purpose as well as a professional development purpose. We believe that skillfully facilitated COP's will develop increased consistent norms of practice that reflect best practices, which is a goal of QA.

CCA of WA oversight of Regional QA

We have an ongoing responsibility to serve as the statewide oversight agency for implementation of locally based Quality Assurance practices. We will ensure that regions have implemented the above steps and will additionally monitor these practices to verify that QA issues are identified and properly addressed. We will also look for trends across regions and explore systems solutions when applicable.

<u>**Collecting and Using Data**</u>

Tracking all technical assistance efforts is an important part of documenting the quality improvement journey. Documentation allows TA Specialists to review past efforts and continue to develop intentional action plans that help participants make progress on their journey in Early Achievers. All technical assistance activities from outreach through Rating Readiness are tracked in the ETO (Efforts to Outcomes) system. A weekly data report is shared with all Regional Coordinators and Member Council Representatives; this provides an opportunity to discuss and evaluate data, to consider quality assurances, and informs regional and state planning and progress monitoring relative to Early Achievers activities.

CCA of WA provides ongoing support and training to regional staff using ETO, including region specific webinars and the development of a comprehensive ETO Users Guide[15].

ETO allows users to review how resources are being deployed across the state. This information can help CCA of WA target support and encouragement to regions based on their specific data. The tracking system generates reports from information in MERIT and from other

TA efforts in one place. Once the participant's individual work plan is added to the system, ETO updates fields with the actual completion dates for each major milestone; creating reports on the actual status of each participant compared to their individual projected plan.

The CCA of WA Data and Evaluation Director and the TA Services Manager analyze data on outreach and marketing efforts; when and how TA resources are being deployed; and how providers are progressing through Level 2 activities. This analysis drives program changes needed to maximize effectiveness and efficiency and informs changes in the TA Framework. The CCA of WA TA Services Manager communicates with local CCA agencies regarding any modifications to the TA plan.

CCA of WA Technical Assistance Oversight Structure

As a hub to seven regional CCA agencies, CCA of WA has worked to develop an infrastructure that aligns services and strengthen system approaches.
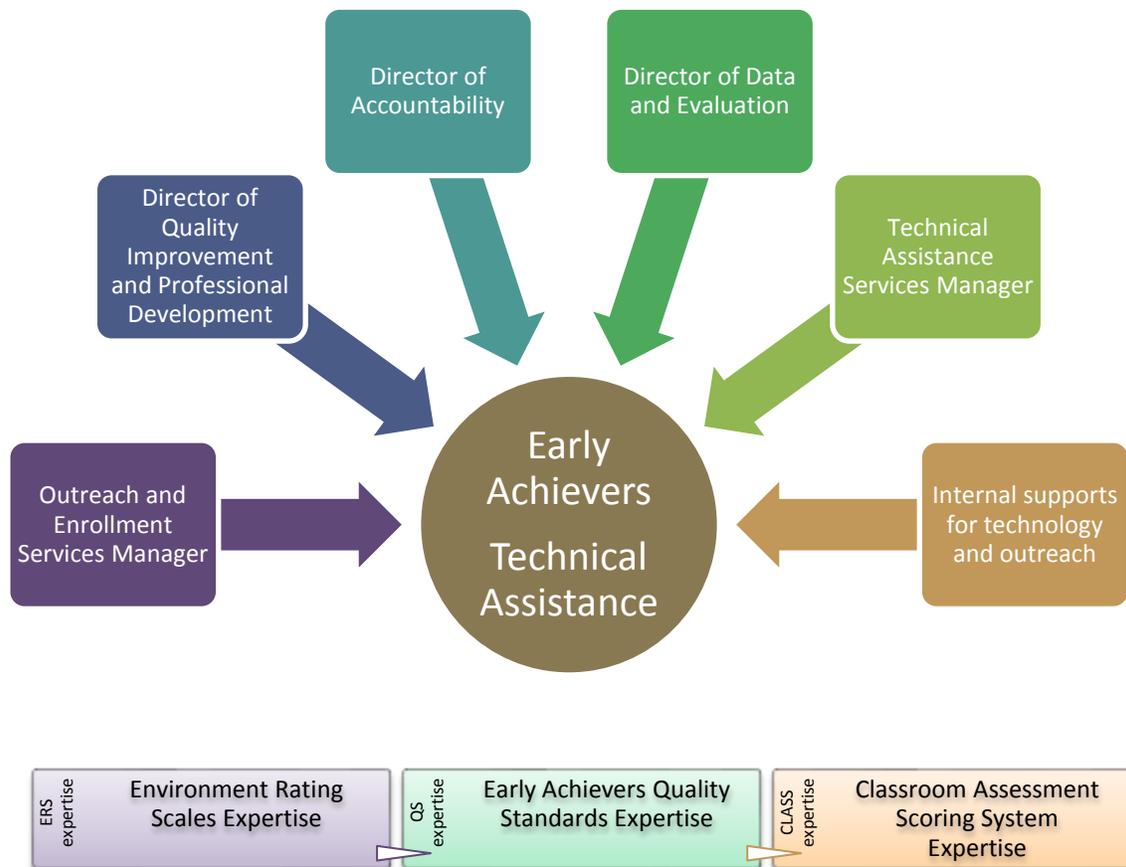
Register for Early Achievers

VISIT #1--*Group*
Operating Guidelines
Participation Agreement
Welcome Kit
Review Resources

VISIT #2-*Individual*
TA Services Agreement
Review the Quality
Standards Questionnaire
Complete the Work Plan

Fast Track:

6 months
from registration to requesting a rating

Participant Ready for
Fastest Track

TA/RR Consultation Touchpoints: Group, Onsite and Distance

Self-Assessment:
•help participants understand purpose and methods
•review results and plan

Appreciative Inquiry with Quality Standards

Training Follow-Up
•Make connections to Quality Standtards

Environment:
•ERS Reflections

Interactions
•Provider-Child Interactions Check

Rating Readiness Tool Review

Participant Attends
Level 2 Training within 3 months

Participant Completes
Self-Assessments within 3-4 months

Participant Submits
Level 2 Application within 4-5 months

Rating Readiness
Consultation, Completes
RRT and Requests Onsite
Evaluation within 6 months

Evaluation Complete

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Register for Early Achievers

VISIT #1--*Group*
Operating Guidelines
Participation Agreement
Welcome Kit
Review Resources

VISIT #2-*Individual*
TA Services Agreement
Review the Quality Standards
Questionnaire

Moderate Track: 12 months from registration to requesting a rating

Participant Ready for **Moderate Pace**

TA Touchpoints: Group, Onsite and Distance

Self-Assessment:
•help participants understand purpose and methods
•review results and plan

Appreciative Inquiry with Quality Standards

Training Follow-Up
•Make connections to Quality Standtards

Environment:
•ERS Reflections

Interactions
•Provider-Child Interactions Check

Rating Readiness Tool Review
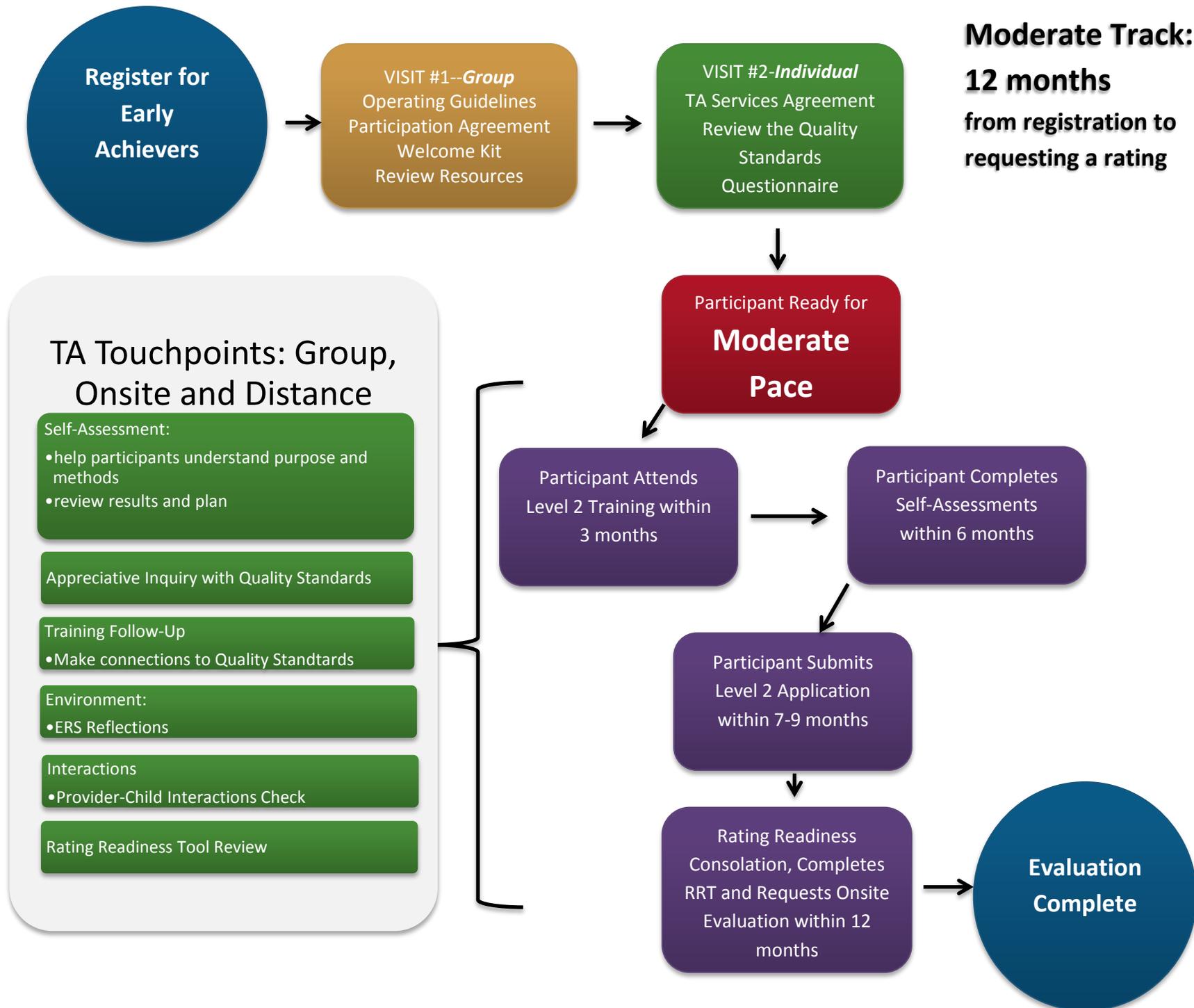
Participant Attends Level 2 Training within 3 months

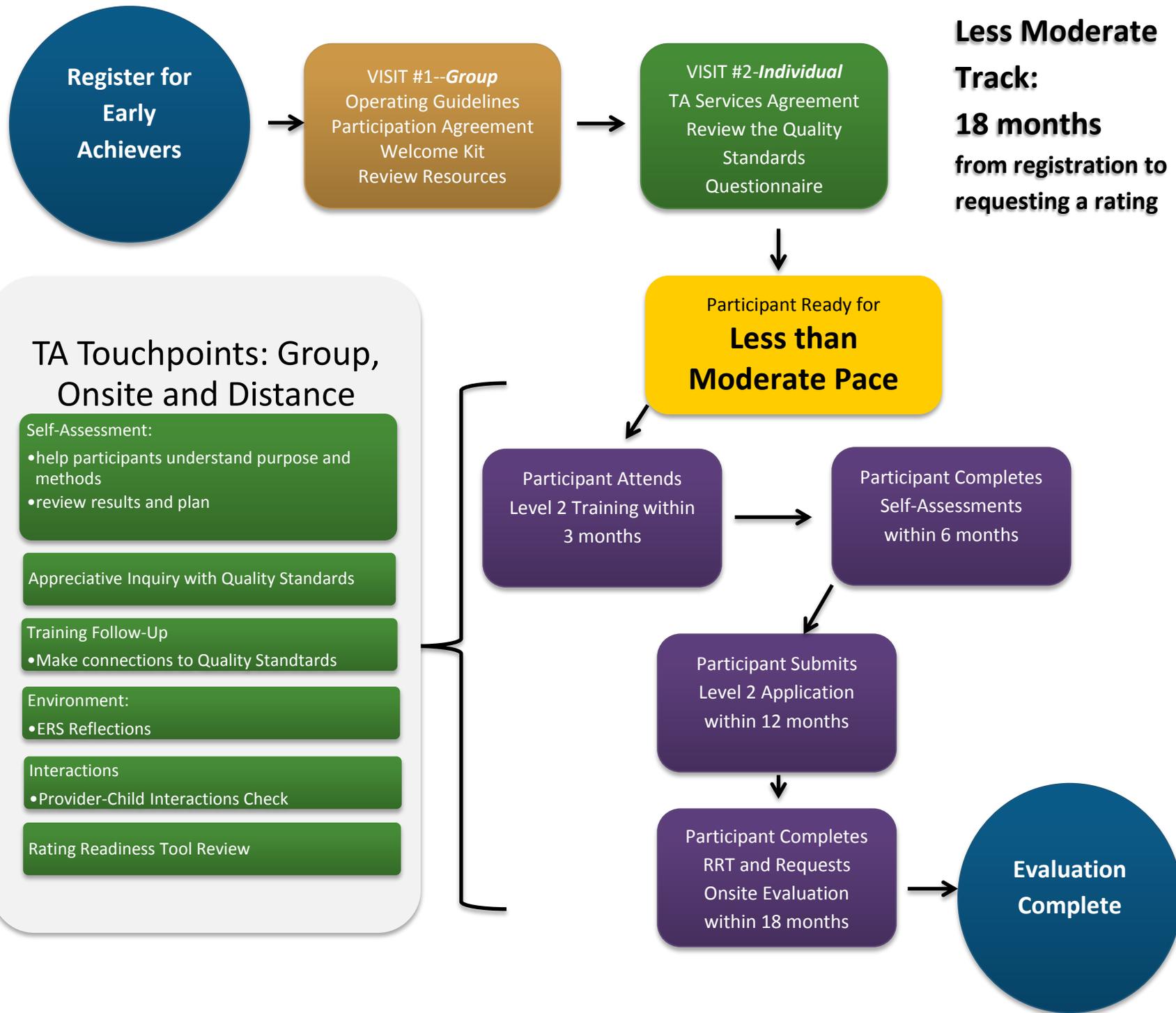Participant Completes Self-Assessments within 6 months

Participant Submits Level 2 Application within 7-9 months

Rating Readiness Consolation, Completes RRT and Requests Onsite Evaluation within 12 months

Evaluation Complete

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Register for Early Achievers

→

VISIT #1--*Group*
Operating Guidelines
Participation Agreement
Welcome Kit
Review Resources

→

VISIT #2-*Individual*
TA Services Agreement
Review the Quality Standards
Questionnaire

Less Moderate Track:
18 months
from registration to requesting a rating

↓

Participant Ready for
Less than Moderate Pace

↓

TA Touchpoints: Group, Onsite and Distance

Self-Assessment:
• help participants understand purpose and methods
• review results and plan

Appreciative Inquiry with Quality Standards

Training Follow-Up
• Make connections to Quality Standtards

Environment:
• ERS Reflections

Interactions
• Provider-Child Interactions Check

Rating Readiness Tool Review

Participant Attends Level 2 Training within 3 months

→

Participant Completes Self-Assessments within 6 months

↓

Participant Submits Level 2 Application within 12 months

↓

Participant Completes RRT and Requests Onsite Evaluation within 18 months

→

Evaluation Complete

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Institute, U. (2010). *Understanding Quality in Context: Child Care Centeres, Communities, Markets and Public Policy.* Washington: The Urban Institute.

Supporting Documents

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[1] Early Achievers Participation Plan, Appendix A

[2] Quality Standards Questionnaire, Appendix B

[3] Powerful Questions Handouts, Appendix C

[4] TA Services Brochure, Appendix D

[5] TA Services Agreement and Rating Readiness Consultation Services Agreement, Appendix E

[6] Reflective Practice Protocols and Resources; Appendix F

[7] TA Onboarding Checklist, Appendix G

[8] TA Self-Assessment, *In development*

[9] TA Manual, *In development,* Abbreviated Contents, Appendix I

[10] Coach Self-Assessment, Appendix J

[11] TA Toolkit, Expanded Contents, Appendix K

[12] Content Expert Lead descriptions, Appendix L

[13] TA Workgroup Charter, Appendix M

[14] TA Observation Tool for Supervisors/Peers, *CCA of WA model in development*

[15] ETO Users Guide, Appendix O