



## Screening Protocol for Phone Calls and Related Materials

The VIQI project team will conduct screening calls to ascertain initial interest in participating in the VIQI project and to obtain information on Program<sup>1</sup> and Center characteristics needed to qualify for participation. During the screening calls, the following materials will be used, which are included in this attachment:

- A. VIQI Phone Discussion Email Templates
- B. Email Template - Send Prior to Initial Screening Call
- C. Sample Agenda for Initial Screening Call
- D. Sample Phone Script for Initial Screening Call
- E. Screening Protocol for Phone Calls
- F. VIQI Project Description
- G. Email Template for Follow-Up Phone Discussion (If Needed)
- H. Expectations Overview for Localities
- I. VIQI - Overview of Curricular Approaches

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<sup>1</sup> "Program" refers to an administrative entity that is affiliated with, operates or oversees one or more centers. A program may be a Head Start grantee or delegate agency or a community-based organization or business that operates one or more child care centers. "Center" is a Head Start or community-based facility that houses Head Start or child care classrooms.

## A. VIQI Phone Discussion Email Templates

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**Email subject line:** Discussion re Major National Early Childhood Research Project

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

*[Placeholder for personalized greeting (e.g., I hope you are well)]* I am writing on behalf of the VIQI project (Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions: Examining the Quality-Child Outcomes Relationship in Child Care and Early Education), an important national research project funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services. Focusing on children's experiences in early care and education across the country, VIQI aims to build evidence about how best to support young children's learning and development.

This project is a unique opportunity for early care and education centers across the country to contribute to national early care and education research and policy and receive:

- free access to high-quality curricular materials
- free training and coaching for one year for participating teachers
- ongoing feedback to guide quality improvement efforts; and
- a stipend to support implementation.

(Choose one of the following as appropriate depending on where we are in timeline):

*[Recruitment team members will introduce themselves.]We are in the early stages of gathering information for the project and are scheduling conversations with early childhood leaders across the country. We would love the opportunity to speak with you by phone for about one hour. During the call, we would like to learn more about [INSERT PROGRAM NAME] and hear your feedback and thoughts about the project.*

*Attached is a brief description to give you some additional background on the VIQI project, as well as a list of topics that we'd like to talk about during our call. Please feel free to suggest a time that works for you. Below are a few suggestions.*

OR

*We are now contacting centers to discuss potential participation in the VIQI project during the [insert year] year. We would like to schedule a phone call to talk with you to learn about your organization and the centers that you operate and discuss their participation in the project.*

*Attached is a brief description to give you some additional background on the VIQI project. Please feel free to suggest a time that works for you. Below are a few suggestions.*

OR

*We are in the planning phases for the [insert year] year of the VIQI project. To help us plan, we are contacting centers to discuss potential participation in the project and hear how centers are doing during*

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*this time (we know the COVID-19 pandemic has affected centers in different ways, so we'd like to understand what that might look like in [LOCALITY]). We would love the opportunity to speak with you by phone for about one hour. During the call, we would like to learn more about [INSERT PROGRAM/CENTER NAME] and hear your thoughts and feedback about the project.*

*Attached is a brief description to give you some additional background on the VIQI project, as well as a list of topics that we'd like to talk about during our call. Please feel free to suggest a time that works for you. Below are a few suggestions.*

Best,

Attachment: Project Description (see Attachment \_\_\_)

*This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to understand the landscape of early care and education throughout the country. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0508 and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to [Contractor Contact Name]; [Contractor Contact Address].*

## **B. Email Template – Send Prior to Initial Screening Call (after we have a confirmed call date)**

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**Email subject line:** In preparation for our discussion re the VIQI project

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for your interest in the VIQI project! We are looking forward to our call with you on [INSERT DATE AND TIME]. On that call, we will be happy to answer any questions you have about the project. We will also ask for some basic information about your agency/organization and the centers you operate.

Attached are:

1. A suggested agenda for our call
2. Examples of the kinds of questions we would like to discuss on our call.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Facilitators will select, add or edit questions from the Screening Protocol for Phone Calls as needed, depending on: 1) the expertise of the informants with whom they are speaking; and 2) the study team's extant knowledge base about the Program and/or its locality accumulated through reviews of existing data.

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If you can provide any of this information in a report or other source that is already prepared, feel free to send it to us ahead of time. Otherwise, we can go through all of these questions with you during our meeting. In the meantime, please feel free to call \_\_\_\_\_ with any questions.

I am also resending a brief description of our project for your reference.

Thanks very much. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

*Attachments:*

- *Suggested Agenda*
- *Sample Questions (Facilitators will pull sample questions from Program-Level Screening Questions and Center-Level Screening Questions as needed, depending on: 1) the expertise of the informants with whom they are speaking; and 2) the study team's extant knowledge base about that program and/or its locality accumulated through reviews of existing data.)*
- *Project Description*

*This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to understand the landscape of early care and education throughout the country. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0508 and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to [Contractor Contact Name]; [Contractor Contact Address].*

## **C. Sample Agenda for Initial Screening Call**

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1. Introductions
2. Review [introductory portion of] VIQI Site Visit PowerPoint and respond to initial questions
3. Discuss questions from Project Team
4. Wrap-up: Questions, timetable and next steps

*An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0508 and the expiration date is 05/31/2021.*

## D. Sample Phone Script for Initial Screening Call

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We're contacting you on behalf of the VIQI project (Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions: Examining the Quality-Child Outcomes Relationship in Child Care and Early Education), a large-scale national research project funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services. Focusing on children's experiences in early care and education across the country, VIQI aims to build evidence about how best to support young children's learning and development.

This project is an opportunity for early care and education centers across the country to contribute to national early care and education research and policy. Participating centers have the opportunity to receive:

- free access to high-quality curricular materials
- free training and coaching for one year and feedback to guide program improvement efforts (for participating teachers in intervention classrooms); and
- a stipend to support implementation.

We are now recruiting centers to participate in the VIQI project during the [insert year]. During this call we would like to share more information about the VIQI project, answer your questions and learn more about your organization and the centers you operate. All information provided in these discussions will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

Thanks very much. We look forward to hearing from you.

*This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to understand the landscape of early care and education throughout the country. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average XX minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0508 and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to [Contractor Contact Name]; [Contractor Contact Address].*

## E. Screening Protocol for Phone Calls

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*Below are sets of illustrative Program-Level<sup>3</sup> Screening Questions and Center-Level Screening Questions organized into modules that focus on different topic areas: Structure/Background, Teaching and*

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<sup>3</sup> "Program" refers to an administrative entity that is affiliated with, operates or oversees one or more centers. A program may be a Head Start grantee or delegate agency or a community-based organization or business that operates one or more child care centers. "Center" is a Head Start or community-based facility that houses Head Start or child care classrooms.

*Learning, and Staffing and Professional Development. The illustrative questions provide examples of the types of questions that may be asked during initial screening calls, and any follow-up calls or site visits, all of which are happening during program and center recruitment in the VIQI Project. Facilitators will not cover all of these questions during any of these calls or visits: they will select, add, or edit questions as needed, depending on: 1) the expertise of the informants with whom they are speaking; and 2) the study team's extant knowledge base about that program and/or its locality accumulated through reviews of existing data.*

**Questions with an asterisk will be prioritized during screening calls.** *In many cases, answers to the Center-Level Screening Questions may be provided via email or in follow-up calls, as it may be necessary to contact staff at individual centers (either directly or through Program staff) to obtain this information. We will answer as many questions as possible prior to follow-up calls or site visits via email. If there are any questions that are not answered before then (e.g. due to time constraints or because more complex questions may be difficult for programs to answer via email), we will ask them during follow-up calls or site visits.*

Note: we will take a flexible approach here in light of COVID-19. We will work with OPRE to make decisions about whether in-person site visits are feasible/appropriate due to COVID-19. If necessary, all landscaping/recruitment activities for the VIQI project will be accomplished through phone calls, emails and videoconferences. In addition, we recognize that many centers may not be operating at capacity. During these calls/visits we will gather information about each center's typical operations. If a center is not eligible (for example due to low enrollment/no classrooms with at least 10 children), we will ask if we can follow up with the center so that if the environment and circumstances change and they come back online in a way that aligns with the study's needs, we can consider them for inclusion in the study.

**Standard introductory language to be used by facilitators (not for distribution):**

- *The Administration for Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation is working with MDRC and its partners on a major study that will help us understand how to improve early care and education for children. We plan to partner with multiple programs and centers to conduct this study.*
- *We are reaching out to ECE programs and centers to:*
  - o *share more details about the study;*
  - o *ask questions to help us better understand the ECE services being provided and the extent to which different programs and centers could be a good fit for the study; and,*
  - o *discuss potential opportunities and challenges that our study team should consider in planning and conducting this study.*

*We know that this is an unusual time because of COVID-19. We would like to understand the early care and education services that you currently provide, and how COVID-19 has impacted your center operations).*

- *This discussion should take about [X] hours.*
- *Participation is voluntary, and responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.*
- *An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0508 and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX.*

- Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to [Contractor Contact Name]; [Contractor Contact Address].

## Program-Level Screening Questions

### Module A1. Program Structure/Background

**Name of ECE Program** (e.g., Head Start Grantee or Delegate Agency, Organization that Operates Child Care Centers, or Independent Child Care Center): \_\_\_\_\_

**Main Contact name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many centers do you **currently** operate that serve 3- and 4-year-old children? How many centers do you **typically** operate that serve 3- and 4-year-old children (i.e. before COVID-19)?\*

*Note: If the answer to either question is NONE, this program may not be eligible. Explain that we need centers serving children ages 3 and 4 and ask if they expect their answer to change in the near future. If yes, ask if we may follow up in the next month to see if anything has changed. If no, thank them for their time and share your contact information and ask them to contact you if anything changes.*

2. How many of those centers **currently** have at least 2 classrooms serving children ages 3 and 4? \*  
How many of those centers **typically** have at least 2 classrooms serving children ages 3 and 4? \*

*Note: If the answer to either question is NONE, this program may not be eligible. Explain that we need centers serving children ages 3 and 4 and ask if they expect their answer to change in the near future. If yes, ask if we may follow up in the next month to see if anything has changed. If no, thank them for their time and share your contact information and ask them to contact you if anything changes.*

3. How have your program/center operations changed as a result of COVID-19? \*
  - a. Did your center close during 2020 due to COVID-19?
    - i. If yes, have they already re-opened (yes/no)?
    - ii. If no, when will they re-open?
  - b. How has enrollment changed in your 3's and 4's classrooms since [last year/last time we checked in with you]?\*
  - c. What percentage of children have disenrolled as a result of COVID-19? [Example probe: For example, are you serving  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  as many children as you did pre-COVID 19?]\*
  - d. How have the characteristics of enrolled children changed?\*
  - e. Have you changed the size or composition of any of your 3's and 4's classrooms (for example, smaller class sizes and/or fewer/more classrooms)? (Please describe?)\*
  - f. Earlier you said that you have fewer children enrolled than before the pandemic. Do you have a sense of when you think your enrollment/ will be about the same size as before the pandemic? \*

- g. Do you have smaller class sizes to promote social distancing?\* If yes, how many children per classroom?\* How big is the classroom? (if respondent doesn't know, ask: How many children used to be in a classroom that size?)
  - h. Have you changed class schedules to promote social distancing (i.e. by staggering schedules for different groups?) Please describe. \*
  - i. How has children's attendance changed due to COVID-19?\*
    - i. What percentage of children are attending consistently?
    - ii. For children who are receiving subsidized care, what percentage of children are attending consistently?
    - iii. Is it a particular subset of children that are attending more or less regularly?
    - iv. What factors do you think are impacting attendance?
  - j. Are you allowing external visitors in classrooms? If yes, under what conditions?
  - k. What guidance are you following regarding opening of child care centers due to COVID-19? (State mandates, CDC guidelines, other?)\*
  - l. Are you experiencing any challenges related to teacher retention or turnover due to COVID-19? For example, have you had to terminate, furlough, reduce the hours of any teachers? Have you had teachers terminate their employment because of COVID-19?
  - m. When it comes to the current and future sustainability of your center, what are you most worried about?\*
4. Does this program include a migrant/seasonal Head Start program? If yes, how many of the classrooms mentioned in question #2 are NOT part of your migrant/seasonal Head Start program? \*
5. How long has this ECE program been operating? \*
6. Do 3- and 4 year-old children **currently** tend to be separated by age, or mixed in the same classrooms? Do 3- and 4-year-old children typically **tend** to be separated by age, or mixed in the same classrooms?\*
7. Does the program currently have mixed-age classrooms serving children ages 2 and 3? Does the program typically have mixed-age classrooms serving children ages 2 and 3?
8. Demographics of population served\*
- Note: If this information differs across centers, please skip this question and answer questions for each center under Module B1 below).*
- a. Approximate percentage of children currently served who are from low-income families?
    - i. How do you define low income?
  - b. Approximate percentage of children **currently** served who have special needs?
    - i. How do you define special needs?



- c. Approximate percentage of children **currently** served who are:  
African American/Black \_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_ White \_\_\_ Asian \_\_\_\_\_ "Other" \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Approximate percentage of children **currently** served who speak a language other than English at home? (specify which languages)
- e. Approximate percentage of your three-and-four-year-old classrooms where instruction is conducted in a language other than English? (Which languages?)
- f. We understand that many ECE Programs have multiple funding streams, and that each funding stream has its own requirements. What are your primary federal/state/local funding streams?\*
- g. How have your funding streams been affected by COVID-19?
- h. Do you currently receive a CARES Act small business loan or emergency funding related to COVID-19?

*Note: If the answer varies across centers, please skip this question and answer the questions under Module B1 for each center.*

- 9. (Head Start only) When is your next scheduled Head Start monitoring review?\*
- 10. Do you anticipate any important changes in your program in the coming year? (Other than what we've already discussed?) (e.g., closing centers, moving center location, changing program options)?  
\* If yes, what changes?
- 11. What are the start and end dates of the "school year"? If your program is year-round, what happens in your three and four year-old classrooms during the summer? Do the same children who attend during the "school year" also attend during the summer?
- 12. Has COVID-19 changed your typical timeline for enrollment?programming? If yes, what are your current plans around beginning "school year" programming?

## Program-Level Screening Questions

### Module A2. Teaching and Learning

13. What curricula or curricular enhancements do your centers **currently** use in 3- and 4-year-old classrooms? What curricula or curricular enhancements do your centers **typically** use in 3- and 4-year-old classrooms? By curriculum, we mean an organized framework that lists goals for children's learning and growth, learning experiences to achieve those goals, what teachers can do to help children achieve those goals, and materials needed.

*Note: If the answer varies across centers, please skip this question and answer the questions under Module B2 for each center.*

|                          |    |  |
|--------------------------|----|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1  | Creative Curriculum ( <i>Teaching Strategies</i> )                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2  | High/Scope   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3  | Building Blocks math curriculum ( <i>McGraw-Hill</i> )                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4  | DLM Early Childhood Express ( <i>McGraw-Hill</i> )                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5  | Everyday Mathematics ( <i>McGraw-Hill</i> )  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6  | Frog Street  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 7  | Foundations ( <i>Wilson Language Training</i> )  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 8  | Handwriting without Tears  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 9  | Let's Begin with the Letter People ( <i>Abrams Learning Trends</i> )                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 | Number Worlds ( <i>McGraw-Hill</i> )   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 11 | Open Circle  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 12 | Opening the World of Learning (OWL) ( <i>Pearson</i> )                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 13 | Preschool PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) ( <i>Channing Bete Co.</i> ) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 14 | Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 15 | Second Step  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16 | Tools of the Mind  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 17 | Teacher- or center-created curriculum  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 18 | Another published curriculum (specify: _____)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 19 | Don't know   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 20 | Do not use a curriculum  |

14. What assessment tools are used to assess children's learning and development?
- When and how are these assessments used? Do they help inform teacher practice?  
*Note: If the answer varies across centers, please skip this question and answer the questions under Module B2 for each center.*
15. Do you anticipate taking on any new curricular initiatives (e.g., switching curricula) in the coming year?
16. Do your centers participate (or will/may participate) in any research studies? If yes, on what topics? On what timeframe?

*Note: If the answer varies across centers, please skip this question and answer the questions under Module B2 for each center.*

## Program-Level Screening Questions

### Module A3. Staffing and Professional Development

17. What does **current** in-service training for teachers entail? What did **typical** in-service training for teachers entail?\* (including any documentation)

*Note: If the answer varies across centers, please skip this question and answer the questions under Module B3 for each center.*

- a. Who is trained and by whom? (e.g. Are lead teachers and assistant teachers/ paraprofessional trained together? Are a subset of teachers or resource teachers trained, who then train the rest of the staff?)
- b. How long, how often, and on what topics?
- c. Does this differ for teachers who are newly hired?
- d. How do you make decisions about training and professional development needs of teachers of 3- and 4-year-olds?
- e. How does the center **currently** provide coverage to enable teachers to attend training? How does the center **typically** provide coverage to enable teachers to attend training? (e.g. substitute teachers, regularly-scheduled PD time)
- f. Is in-service training **currently** required or voluntary? Is in-service training **typically** required or voluntary?

18. Do teachers **currently** receive ongoing mentoring or coaching (Do teachers **typically** receive ongoing coaching?\*) (Not including observations completed by center director/administrator or supervisor) By coach, we mean a professional who provides feedback and support to help improve what a teacher does in his/her classroom.

*Note: If the answer varies across centers, please skip this question and answer the questions under Module B3 for each center.*

- a. How often, how long, by whom, and on what topics?
- b. Does it involve a classroom observational visit?
- c. Does it involve a sit-down meeting?
- d. Do teachers receive any mentoring? (e.g., from a peer, head teacher)

19. Do teachers have shared planning time?

*Note: If the answer varies across centers, please skip this question and answer the questions under Module B3 for each center.*

- a. How long, how often, and with whom (e.g. lead teacher alone, lead with assistant)?

20. Do you have plans to take on any new professional development initiatives in the coming year?

- a. Has COVID-19 affected the professional development opportunities for your teachers? If yes, how so?
- 
21. What are the minimum education requirements for each type of staff listed below? (High school graduate, associate's degree, bachelor's degree or master's degree or higher?)
    - a. Lead teachers who work with children ages 3-5
    - b. Assistant teachers/paraprofessionals who work with children ages 3-5
    - c. Aides who work with children ages 3-5
    - d. Center administrator (lead administrator of individual center(s))
    - e. Education director, coordinator or specialist, if this is a different person than the center administrator

## Center-Level Screening Questions

## Module B1. Center Structure/Background

Note: Please answer for each center that has at least 2 classrooms serving 3- and 4-year-old children.

Name of center: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Main contact person: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long has this center been operating?
2. What is the current publicly funded enrollment for this center? What is the typical publicly funded enrollment for this center?
  - a. What is the current actual enrollment?
3. Demographics of population currently/typically being served (*Answer only if different for each individual center*)
  - a. Approximate percentage of children **currently/typically** served who are from low-income families?
    - a. How do you define low income?
  - b. Approximate percentage of children **currently** served who have special needs?
    - a. How do you define special needs?
  - c. Approximate percentage of children **currently** served who are:
  - d. African American/Black \_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_ White \_\_\_ Asian \_\_\_ "Other" \_\_\_\_\_
    - a. Approximate percentage of children **currently** served who speak a language other than English at home? (specify which languages)
  - e. Approximate percentage of your three-and-four-year-old classrooms where instruction is conducted in a language other than English? (Which languages?)
4. Is this center NAEYC-accredited?\*
5. Does this center have an overall quality rating (e.g. through a QRIS or other rating system)? If yes, what is the rating and what agency or group provided the rating?\*
6. How have your center operations changed as a result of COVID-19?\*
  - a. Did your center temporarily close? If yes, when did/will it re-open?
  - b. How has your center enrollment changed in your 3's and 4's classrooms [last year/last time we checked in with you]? \*

- c. What percentage of families have disenrolled as a result of COVID-19? [Example probe: For example, are you serving  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  as many children as you did pre-COVID 19?]\*
  - d. How have the characteristics of children and families enrolled changed?\*
  - e. Have you closed or combined some of your 3's and 4's classrooms? (If yes, how many?)\*
  - f. Earlier, you said you reduced the number of classrooms/children enrolled. Do you have a date in mind by when you plan to return to the original number of classrooms/enrolled children similar to [insert date from previous item] when the Covid pandemic began \*
  - g. Do you have smaller class sizes to promote social distancing? \* If yes, how many children per classroom? How big is the classroom? (if respondent doesn't know, ask: How many children used to be in a classroom that size?)
  - h. Have you changed class schedules to promote social distancing (i.e. by staggering schedules for different groups?) Please describe. \*
  - i. How has children's attendance changed due to COVID-19? \*
    - i. What percentage of children are attending consistently?
    - ii. For children who are receiving subsidized care, what percentage of children are attending consistently?
    - iii. Is it a particular subset of children that are attending more or less regularly?
    - iv. What factors do you think are driving attendance?
  - j. Are you allowing external visitors in classrooms? Under what conditions?
  - k. What guidance are you following regarding opening of your center due to COVID-19? (State mandates, CDC guidelines, other?)
  - l. Are you experiencing any challenges related to teacher retention or turnover due to COVID-19? For example, have you had to terminate, furlough, reduce the hours of any teachers? Have you had teachers terminate their employment because of COVID-19?
  - m. When it comes to the current and future sustainability of your center, what are you most worried about?
7. Do you anticipate any important changes at this center in the coming year or so? (e.g., center closing, moving location, changing curricula, starting new initiatives)?\*
8. Please answer the questions in Table B1 (at the end of this document).\*

## Center-Level Screening Questions

### Module B2. Teaching and Learning

9. We understand that many ECE Centers have multiple funding streams, and that each funding stream has its own requirements.
- a. What are your primary federal/state/local funding streams? (e.g. Head Start, state or local pre-k)\*
  - b. How have your funding streams been affected by COVID-19?
  - c. Do you currently receive a CARES Act small business loan or emergency funding related to COVID-19?
10. What curricula or curricular enhancements does your center/do your centers **currently** use in 3- and 4-year-old classrooms? What curricula or curricular enhancements does your center/each of your centers **typically** use in 3- and 4-year-old classrooms? By curriculum, we mean an organized

framework that lists goals for children's learning and growth, learning experiences to achieve those goals, what teachers can do to help children achieve those goals, and materials needed.

( If the answer is the same for all centers within a grantee/multi-center program, simply answer the question in **Module A** of this protocol. You do not need to fill out a separate form for each center unless the answer is different for each center within a grantee/multi-center program.)\*

|                          |    |  |
|--------------------------|----|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1  | Creative Curriculum ( <i>Teaching Strategies</i> )                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2  | High/Scope   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3  | Building Blocks math curriculum ( <i>McGraw-Hill</i> )                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4  | DLM Early Childhood Express ( <i>McGraw-Hill</i> )                                       |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6  | Frog Street  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 7  | Foundations ( <i>Wilson Language Training</i> )  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 8  | Handwriting without Tears  |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> | 12 | Opening the World of Learning (OWL) ( <i>Pearson</i> )                                   |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> | 14 | Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 15 | Second Step  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16 | Tools of the Mind  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 17 | Teacher- or center-created curriculum  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 18 | Another published curriculum (specify: _____)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 19 | Don't know   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 20 | Do not use a curriculum  |

- a. What assessment tools are used to assess children's learning and development? How are these assessments used? Do they help inform teacher practice? (*Answer only if different for each individual center.*)

11. Do you anticipate taking on any new curricular initiatives (e.g., switching curricula) in the coming year?

12. Do your centers/Is this center participating (or will/may participate) in any research studies? If yes, which centers? On what topics? On what timeframe?

## Center-Level Screening Questions

### Module B3. Staffing and Professional Development

13. What does **current** in-service training for teachers entail? What does **typical** in-service training for teachers entail? (*Answer only if different for each individual center.*)\*
- Who is trained and by whom? (e.g. Are lead teachers and assistant teachers/ paraprofessional trained together? Are a subset of teachers or resource teachers trained, who then train the rest of the staff?)
  - How long, how often, and on what topics?
  - Does this differ for teachers who are newly hired?
  - How do you make decisions about training and professional development needs of teachers of 3- and 4-year-olds?
  - How does the center **currently** provide coverage to enable teachers to attend training? How does the center typically provide coverage to enable teachers to attend training? (e.g. substitute teachers, regularly-scheduled PD time)
  - Is in-service training **currently** required or voluntary? Is in-service training **typically** required or voluntary?
14. Do teachers **currently** receive ongoing mentoring or coaching? Do teachers **typically** receive ongoing mentoring or coaching? (Not including observations completed by center director/administrator or supervisor)\* By coach, we mean a professional who provides feedback and support to help improve what a teacher does in his/her classroom. (*Answer only if different for each individual center.*)
- How often, how long, by whom, and on what topics?
  - Does it involve a classroom visit?
  - Does it involve a sit-down meeting?
  - Do teachers receive any mentoring? (e.g., from a peer, head teacher)
15. What does teacher supervision entail? (including any documentation) (*Answer only if different for each individual center.*)
- How often, how long, by whom, and on what topics?
16. Do teachers **currently/typically** have shared planning time? (*Answer only if different for each individual center.*)
- How long, how often, and with whom (e.g. lead teacher alone, lead with assistant, teachers across classrooms)?
17. Do you have plans to take on any new professional development initiatives in the coming year?
- Has COVID-19 affected the professional development opportunities for your teachers? If yes, how so?



18. How many lead teachers have left the center in the past 12 months? Assistant teachers?

**TABLE B1 - (Module B1, Continued)**

| Four year-old classrooms |                  |               |                 |                           |                      |   |   |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Class                    | Total # Children | Days per week | Classroom hours | Staggered child schedule? | Lead teacher's hours | LT <sup>4</sup> highest education level | AT <sup>5</sup> highest education level |
|                          |                  |               |                 |                           |                      |   |   |
|                          |                  |               |                 |                           |                      |   |   |
|                          |                  |               |                 |                           |                      |   |   |
|                          |                  |               |                 |                           |                      |   |   |
|                          |                  |               |                 |                           |                      |   |   |
|                          |                  |               |                 |                           |                      |   |   |

| Mixed-age (3- and 4-year-old) classrooms |                  |                               |               |                 |                           |                      |                            |                            |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Class                                    | Total # Children | Approx. number of 3-year-olds | Days per week | Classroom hours | Staggered child schedule? | Lead teacher's hours | LT highest education level | AT highest education level |
|  |                  |                               |               |                 |                           |                      |                            |                            |
|  |                  |                               |               |                 |                           |                      |                            |                            |
|  |                  |                               |               |                 |                           |                      |                            |                            |
|  |                  |                               |               |                 |                           |                      |                            |                            |
|  |                  |                               |               |                 |                           |                      |                            |                            |

<sup>4</sup> Lead Teacher

<sup>5</sup> Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional

## F. VIQI Project Description

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### Project Overview

**Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions (VIQI): Examining the Quality-Child Outcomes Relationship in Child Care and Early Education** is an important national study funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

#### What will the VIQI Project involve?

Focusing on children's experiences in early care and education across the country, VIQI aims to build evidence about how different levels and features of classroom quality support children's learning. The project will also help us understand what conditions are necessary to help early care and education programs enhance the quality of classroom practices and teachers' interactions with children to improve child outcomes. Lessons learned from VIQI will also be used to inform policy and programmatic improvements in early care and education across the nation.

#### Why should early care and education programs participate?

VIQI is a unique opportunity for early care and education programs to test promising curricula – Creative Curriculum and Connect4Learning – with enhanced professional development, designed to promote children's learning and skills across multiple domains of school readiness. Centers agreeing to participate will have an opportunity to receive:

- High-quality **curricular materials**
- **Teacher training** led by leading experts in early care and education
- Ongoing, in-classroom **coaching support to teachers**
- **Ongoing feedback** to guide professional development and program improvement efforts
- A stipend to support participation in the VIQI project

Centers will be randomly assigned to receive one of the enhanced curricular and professional development approaches or to continue with their usual curriculum and professional development.

#### What is the project timeline, and who will be invited to participate?

VIQI is a multi-year project which is being conducted in two key phases. The first phase launched in summer of 2018 and entailed a small, year-long pilot study across three localities to inform the implementation and feasibility of the study. The full-scale phase will be launched in the summer of [insert year] across multiple localities in partnership with Head Start and community-based early care and education providers. The project team is actively engaging in conversations with stakeholders, Head Start and child care providers that serve 3- and 4-year-old children to ensure the project is well-designed to directly answer questions about how best to strengthen the quality of early care and education programming in your area.

*The VIQI Project is sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. VIQI is being conducted by MDRC and its partners, Abt Associates/Abt SRBI, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, and MEF Associates. For more information, please contact: Sharon Huang (212) 340-8882, [sharon.huang@mdrc.org](mailto:sharon.huang@mdrc.org); Mike Fishman (703) 838-*

2724, [mike.fishman@mefassociates.com](mailto:mike.fishman@mefassociates.com); or Program Officer, Ivelisse Martinez-Beck (202)690-7885, [Ivelisse.martinezbeck@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Ivelisse.martinezbeck@acf.hhs.gov).

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## **G. Email Template for Follow-Up Phone Discussion (If Needed)**

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**Email subject line:** Scheduling a Follow-Up Phone Call re VIQI project

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you so much for sharing your insights and expertise with us on our recent call! Your input is critically important to our team as we develop our plans for the VIQI project. As we discussed at the end of our call, there are a few topics we'd like to follow up on. For example: [add bulleted topics here, as needed]. We would like to schedule a brief phone call with you and [add names of staff] in the next week.

Below are some potential dates and times for a call with our team. Please let us know if any of these would work for you.

[Potential dates]

Thank you very much for considering this request. Again, participation in this conversation is voluntary, and responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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## **H. Variations in the Implementation of Quality Interventions (VIQI): Expectations and Commitments for Programs**

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This document provides an overview of the anticipated criteria, expectations, and benefits for programs and centers that participate in the VIQI study.

## Projected VIQI Project Sample Sizes

A **year-long full-scale study** will begin in [insert year], in approximately 120 centers across multiple cities. Approximately half of the centers will be Head Start and the other half will be child care. [Enter locality-specific information here if relevant]

## Criteria for Selection of Localities

To move forward with a potential locality, we would need to identify whether the locality has the following characteristics:

- A sufficient number of centers that meet the following criteria and expectations:
  - At least two full-day<sup>6</sup> classrooms serving low-income three- and four-year old children
  - Agree to work within project guidelines and design
  - Are not already implementing the curricular approaches used in the study
  - Are not planning major programmatic or structural changes during life of study
- Variation in quality among centers

In addition, we need to understand the contextual factors that impact the feasibility of a study of this type. This could include existing curricular requirements at the state or local level, presence of existing research studies, and general support of local and regional stakeholders.

Understanding these characteristics, especially around capacity and variation in quality, may require a data request to the relevant agencies to understand the possibilities for implementation. If that is the case, we will follow the necessary procedures to make this request.

## Benefits to Centers

Centers that have been randomly assigned to a curricular approach will have access to free high-quality curricular materials for the curricular approach they are implementing, as well as training and coaching for their teachers. In addition, all centers will receive the following supports:

- Stipend to support center's participation in VIQI
- Opportunity to contribute to growing evidence base
- Increased visibility as part of national project

## Program<sup>7</sup> and Center Expectations

Centers will be randomly assigned to a curricular approach or to a comparison group that will continue business-as-usual routines and instructional practices. Random assignment is the most reliable way to study the effectiveness of the curricular approaches; because random assignment ensures that the characteristics of the centers implementing each approach are the same at the start of the study, differences in outcomes can be attributed to the curricular approaches. It is important to note that the study will not be judging the effectiveness of individual classrooms, centers, or programs.

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<sup>6</sup> In this document we define "full-day" to mean that the same lead teachers and children are present for at least 6 hours per day.

<sup>7</sup> In this document, we refer to Head Start grantees, delegate agencies, organizations that operate multiple child care centers, and independent centers as "programs."

In addition, we expect that participating early care and education programs will meet the following expectations in supporting the implementation of VIQI:

- Designate a Study Liaison to work with the VIQI team
- Support teachers in implementation of curricular approaches
- Work with VIQI team to apply VIQI funds towards hiring of coach(es)
- Enable teachers to attend training and ongoing, in-classroom coaching sessions
- Enable teachers, center directors, and other staff to participate in the field research, interviews, and surveys
- Ensure that comparison group classrooms or centers do not implement the VIQI curricular approaches during the study period

At the center level, all centers would be expected to meet the following expectations:

- Ensure leadership meets regularly with Study Liaison
- Support teachers, directors, other staff, and children to participate in field research, interviews, and surveys
- Provide periodic updates on teacher and child rosters

Centers assigned to a curricular approach will also be expected to support teachers in the implementation of the identified approach and to enable teachers to attend training and coaching in support of this approach.

### **Additional Information**

The VIQI project is sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. VIQI is being conducted by MDRC and its partners, Abt Associates/Abt SRBI, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, and MEF Associates. For more information, please contact the principal investigator, JoAnn Hsueh, at [joann.hsueh@mdrc.org](mailto:joann.hsueh@mdrc.org) or the program officer, Ivelisse Martinez-Beck, at [ivelisse.martinezbeck@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ivelisse.martinezbeck@acf.hhs.gov).

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## **I. VIQI – Curricular Approaches**

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Curricular approaches that will be part of the VIQI full-scale study include ***Creative Curriculum*** and ***Connect4Learning*** (C4L). These approaches were selected through an extensive review of existing evidence and advice from leading experts in the field. Each is designed to help strengthen the quality of instruction in early care and education classrooms.

As part of the VIQI project, both curricular approaches will include free resources to support implementation, including teacher training and ongoing, in-classroom coaching, as well as ongoing technical assistance from leading early childhood program developers.

These two approaches meet key criteria for quality curricula in early childhood settings:

- Both are developmentally appropriate for three- and four-year-old children.
- Both are aligned with relevant standards, including Head Start and [*insert relevant state and local standards for that locality*].
- Both incorporate key school-readiness domains into the curricula, including math, literacy, and social-emotional learning.
- Both integrate a combination of large and small group activities, providing a variety of opportunities for children to engage with teachers and peers.
- Both provide structured lessons, while allowing opportunities for expansion and adaptation by teachers.
- Both allow for differentiated instruction, to ensure that teachers can tailor activities and approaches to children at different developmental levels and with different styles of learning.

Implementation of these curricular approaches will require some shifts in teacher practice, which could include teacher planning, center and/or classroom structure, and flow of the classroom. The degree to which changes will occur may vary by approach, but it is important to expect that flexibility and openness to change will be needed to implement the approaches successfully.

**Brief descriptions of these curricula are attached.**

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