

# The Power of Public-Private Partnerships in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

*What you'll learn...*

## The Top 5 Reasons for Engaging in a Public-Private Partnership Model for QRIS

- 1 Better public image of all organizations and a stronger market perception
- 2 Greater productivity and access to resources
- 3 Shared investment and engagement
- 4 Better delivery of services and flexibility when needed
- 5 Partnership with a purpose

**Nationwide, quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) are working hard to improve both children’s early learning outcomes and the overall quality of the early childhood education system. This effort requires long-term commitment and vision, and should engage an element of continuous quality improvement that recognizes achievement while building a stronger early childhood education system for all.**

This kind of long-term commitment can feel daunting in light of an ever-changing political landscape and ever-changing budgets. A public-private partnership model supports QRIS success by enhancing core QRIS components—including outreach, communications, and policy development—and it may positively impact both a QRIS’s cultural-competence and its connection to the community it serves.

A public-private partnership is a working agreement between one or more government agencies and one or more private-sector entities, such as foundations, businesses, and trade associations. In a public-private partnership, the skills and assets of both sectors (public and private) are shared in delivering a service to the public.

### **Why use the public-private partnership model for your QRIS?**

#### **Here are the top 5 reasons:**

- 1** Better public image of all organizations and a stronger market perception
- 2** Greater productivity and access to resources
- 3** Shared investment and engagement
- 4** Better delivery of services and flexibility when needed
- 5** Partnership with a purpose

*[Read on...](#)*

**A public-private partnership demonstrates to provider and parent audiences that your state's QRIS has a broad base of support, and it helps to clearly articulate the QRIS's connection to the entire community it serves, regardless of family income.**

## **REASON #1:**

### **Better Public Image and Stronger Market Perception**

Because standalone government services are often not seen as innovative or effective, developing partnerships with key private organizations such as foundations or area private businesses can improve the image of your state's QRIS, and strengthen the perception of your QRIS brand among your local provider market and among parents who need quality early education for their families.

Another challenge with a non-partnership model is that, when government alone assumes leadership for the QRIS, parents and providers may believe the system is intended only for low-income or at-risk families. A public-private partnership helps communicate that your QRIS is not only intended for all citizens, but it also offers a comprehensive method for understanding the quality of care provided by participating programs.

We want early childhood education providers and parents with young children to recognize that QRIS is an innovative model for reform, as well as a credible, proven, and effective system to improve quality in early care and education. To deliver that message effectively, a public-private partnership demonstrates to your provider and parent audiences that the QRIS has a broad base of support, and it helps to clearly articulate the system's connection to the entire community it serves, regardless of income level.

## REASON #2:

### Greater Productivity and Access to Resources

Implementing and evolving your state's QRIS is an expensive endeavor. A recent BUILD Initiative report notes that, "Adequate funding for the infrastructure as well as ongoing quality service delivery and improvements is needed."<sup>1</sup> We've found that funding from private foundations, businesses, and individual donors, can provide QRIS administrators with additional financial resources they need to successfully implement and evolve their state's QRIS in a timely fashion.

For example, government agencies may not always allocate adequate time or money to develop an effective marketing and communications strategy or message. However, experience has shown that in the QRIS realm—especially where enrollment in the system is voluntary and perception challenges exist—marketing and outreach activities are a key component to successful implementation of the QRIS. Funders from the private sector often have experience and competence in this area, and they understand the value and impact of effective marketing and communications efforts. As such, they may be more likely to dedicate the significant financial resources needed to communicate the QRIS message to target audiences—including parents, providers, and policy-makers.

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As appropriate, these resources can be used for a wide range of marketing activities—communication strategy, development or redesign of the brand identity, or a variety of marketing materials: designing/building the website, building or maintaining a social media campaign, and even community outreach materials and engagements.

<sup>1</sup> *Quality Rating and Improvement Systems: Stakeholder Theories of Change and Models of Practice*, June 2015

### **REASON #3:**

## **Shared Investment and Engagement**

Private-sector organizations, businesses, and individuals all have a vested interest in improving early childhood education. More engaged and empowered citizens, a more educated and prepared workforce, more livable neighborhoods and communities—all are benefits of improved early childhood education.

By leveraging each audience's particular interest, QRIS can lay claim to additional human and financial resources in support

of the QRIS mission—creating a team of influencers and ambassadors to carry the message, build consensus, and further the cause. Collaboration with a multitude of stakeholders is integral to the success of every QRIS.

Establishing strong relationships with public policymakers, early child care providers, and families in your community develops a team of partners who are critical to your QRIS's development, ongoing operations and evaluation, and, ultimately, its successful implementation.

### **REASON #4:**

## **Better Delivery of Services and Flexibility When Needed**

In some cases, public funds can be used only for certain activities, strategies, or “in-house” systems in support of your QRIS work—many of which were intended for other programs or initiatives and may not meet the needs of a QRIS for early childhood education. In addition, it is sometimes difficult to move funds through a government system, resulting in delays or challenges when contracting with vendors to execute elements of your QRIS implementation.

**With more broad-based community support, QRIS have the opportunity to be more flexible, innovative, and organic.**

We've found that the public-private partnership model can be beneficial as your state builds and grows its QRIS—providing more flexibility, a key characteristic of project growth and success—without being hampered by state or local bureaucracies. With more broad-based community support, QRIS have the opportunity to be more flexible, innovative, and organic.

**The goal of this work is to create a continuous quality improvement system for early care and education, and that effort requires a long-term, dedicated commitment to an effective public-private partnership.**

## **REASON #5:**

### **Partnership With a Purpose**

For a number of reasons, it's important to bolster knowledge and an understanding of the importance of QRIS in the private sector. As noted above, one reason is that non-financial resources from private entities can be leveraged within a QRIS. And when business and community leaders understand the critical role of early childhood education in our society, they can serve as system advocates at the state and policy level in support of future funding and enhancements.

Further, private-sector entities like businesses and foundations can work with their own marketing agencies to incorporate QRIS messages in their public-facing communications, and can advise QRIS administrators on marketing matters—saving you valuable resources while demonstrating their own commitment to the community, its children, and the state's future.

In the end, the goal of this work is to create a continuous quality improvement system for early care and education, and that effort requires a long-term, dedicated commitment to an effective public-private partnership. Creating a collaboration that delivers tangible benefits for all parties supports the success of your QRIS and leads to a lasting impact in which children receive the quality care they need to succeed in life.

## Conclusion

Quality rating and improvement systems are a unique tool for reforming early care and education (ECE) in the U.S., and they provide a key framework for your state's early care and education system. A well-designed QRIS has all the elements of a high functioning standards-based system, yielding long-term benefits to our society, economy, and quality of life for all citizens—now and in years to come.

With the potential for such far-reaching impact, it's critical to build partnerships that maximize the assets of both public and private organizations in order to realize the long-term vision, and to deliver a stronger system of early care and education for future generations.

## About Orange Square

Orange Square is dedicated to improving the lives of children and their families by combining your expertise in QRIS with our expertise in marketing communications and the QRIS National Learning Network.

Together with you, we work to improve the quality of early care and education by building public awareness and engagement.



Learn more about our services and knowledge on QRIS marketing communications at [orangesquare.com/QRIS](http://orangesquare.com/QRIS)



Join our LinkedIn group dedicated to QRIS marketing and communications at [linkedin.com/groups/8540612](https://linkedin.com/groups/8540612)



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