



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

PRACTICAL IDEAS TO SUPPORT CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT



The National Quality Framework aims to drive continuous quality improvement in children's education and care to provide quality learning and developmental outcomes for children.

This information sheet provides practical ideas for approved providers, service leaders, teachers and educators to support continuous quality improvement.

It has been developed using the findings from the 2019 [Quality improvement research project](#), conducted in long day care services by Macquarie University, in partnership with Queensland University of Technology and Edith Cowan University.

Genuine and sustained quality improvement in children's education and care is a shared responsibility. Approved providers, service leaders, teachers and educators all play vital roles.

The [Quality improvement research project](#) has identified key ways services can achieve the best outcomes for their children and families.

KEY FINDINGS

Genuine and sustained quality improvement is supported by:

- collaboration and shared responsibility
- leadership at all levels
- service philosophy as the foundation
- stakeholder involvement
- meaningful engagement with assessment and rating.

WHAT CAN APPROVED PROVIDERS AND ORGANISATIONS DO?

Lead, support and resource quality improvement by:

- recruiting and retaining qualified and skilled early childhood teachers and educators

- providing access to professional learning opportunities
- creating a positive work environment
- providing conditions and time to promote and share perspectives on professional practice.

Key ways to support quality improvement include:

- the approved provider's vision for quality practice and resourcing to realise it
- organisational support by providers
- building and enabling agency and local-level decision-making on programs and practices to meet community needs.

WHAT CAN SERVICE LEADERS DO?

Ensure the service philosophy is the foundation for quality improvement and:

- is informed by theory and research
- is used for critical reflection on practice
- reflects the local service and their community.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ASSESSMENT AND RATING PROCESS IS A KEY DRIVER FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT.

Create and maintain a supportive workplace by:

- provision of time for collaboration between teachers and educators on programs and practice
- regular meetings between the educational leader, team and individual teachers and educators
- providing access to quality professional development
- mentoring the team through training
- engaging with other professionals.

Recruit and support an effective educational leader who:

- has extensive knowledge and understanding of curriculum and pedagogy
- can lead learning, collaborative critical reflection, teamwork and practice change
- ensures learning is visible in service planning (e.g. Quality Improvement Plan) and practice
- knows and works with individual teachers and educators to support professional growth and goals.

What the researchers saw working well in practice

Observations in Exceeding NQS services:

- The educational leader is likely to have an early childhood teaching qualification.
- The approved provider values and supports the role of educational leader, providing training, resources and time to ensure the role helps lead quality improvement.

WHAT CAN TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS DO?

Teachers and educators need to be proactive in their own learning, support the professional learning of others, engage in critical reflection of practice and embed continuous quality improvement in their practice.

What the researchers saw working well in practice

Observations in Exceeding NQS services:

- Quality improvement is a team effort.
- Qualified and skilled educational leaders provide direction and support.
- Teachers and educators see quality improvement as a professional responsibility, with all team members accountable to each other.
- An embedded culture of shared learning, critical reflection and commitment to continuous quality improvement is seen across the team.

WHICH TOOLS SUPPORT QUALITY IMPROVEMENT?

1. An effective QIP

The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) needs to be a strategic tool to plan, prioritise, monitor, evaluate and evidence quality improvement.

Opportunities include:

- training and resources to support service leaders to develop the QIP
- setting a page limit, using specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) goals¹ and allowing time for reflection and evaluation of progress and achievements
- using the QIP process as a practice scenario in leadership development programs
- using examples of proactive change strategies and evidence of quality improvement in the QIP
- implementing proactive approaches for collaborative development of the QIP, with team engagement and input from children and families, and making this visible
- embedding diversity, culture and inclusion in all aspects of curriculum decision-making and in key documents such as the QIP
- keeping the QIP up-to-date, with regular progress notes and periodic evaluations of progress towards priority goals.

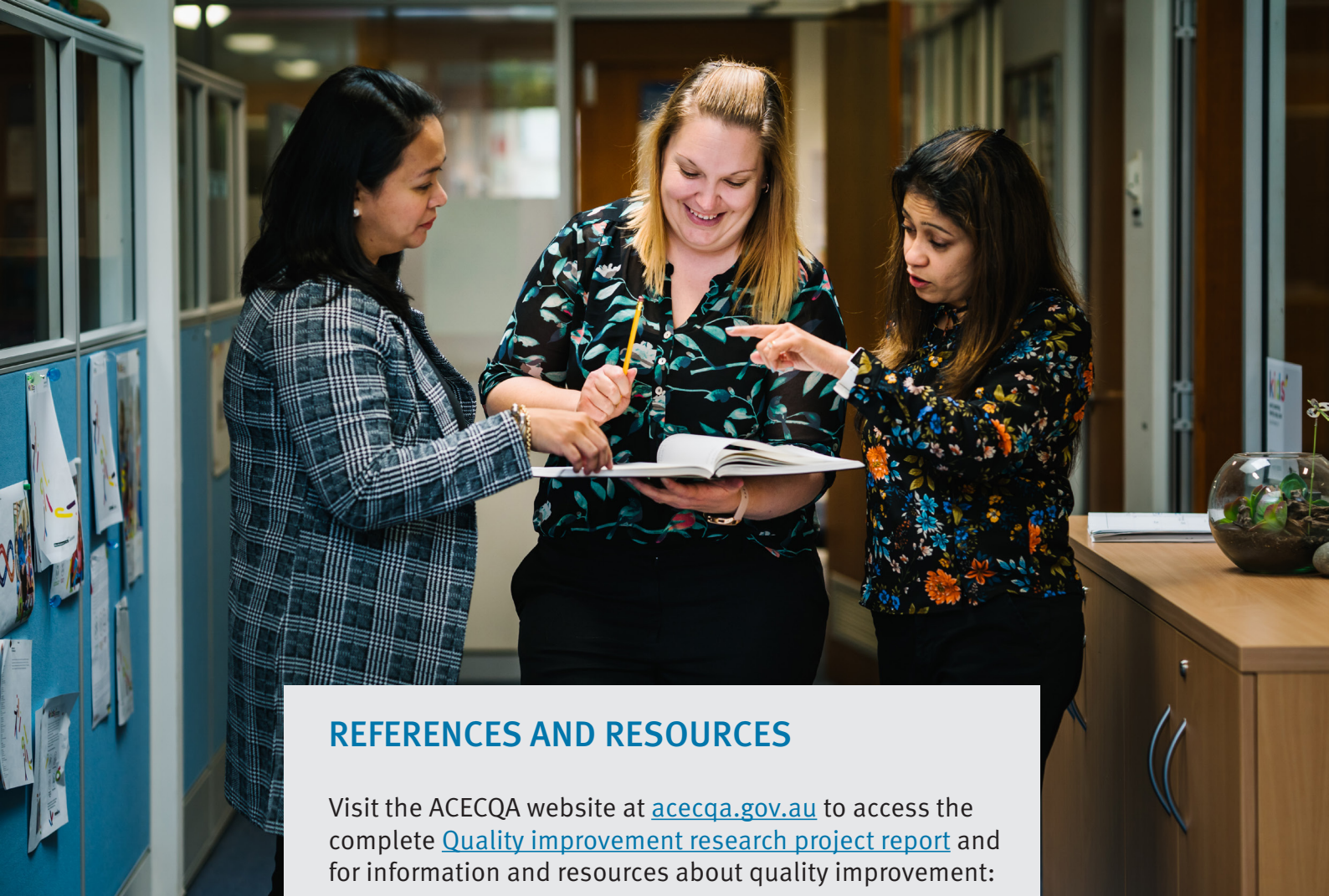
2. Assessment and rating process

Meaningful engagement with the assessment and rating process is a key driver for quality improvement, informing ongoing learning, critical reflection and practice change.

Strategies include:

- taking on board feedback provided in the assessment and rating report
- sharing feedback with the team and using the report as a catalyst for practice change, training and/or greater organisational support
- using the assessment and rating process to strengthen teamwork
- establishing positive relationships with the regulatory authority to support two-way information sharing.

¹ Australian Public Service Commission (2018) [Developing SMART goals](#).



REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Visit the ACECQA website at [acecqa.gov.au](https://www.cecqa.gov.au) to access the complete [Quality improvement research project report](#) and for information and resources about quality improvement:

- Harrison, L.J., Hadley, F., Irvine, S., et al. (2020) [Quality Improvement Research Project](#), Report commissioned by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, ACECQA, Sydney.
- [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)
- [National Quality Standard Assessment and Rating Instrument](#)
- [Quality Improvement Plan template](#)
- [National Quality Standard](#), including a guide to help providers identify which practices they can, or should, improve.

Information about quality improvement is also available through your state and territory regulatory authority. Contact them via the details on the [ACECQA website](#).