

Early Learning Guidelines Resource:
Recommendations and Issues for Consideration
When Writing or Revising Early Learning Guidelines

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The Purpose of this Document

Background Information

The purpose of this document is to describe key decisions that committees working on early learning guidelines (ELGs) should consider. It is intended as a guide for those charged with the important task of developing and/or revising ELGs, irrespective of the diverse states in which they reside or the diverse populations of children they serve. Though addressing both the content of ELGs and the process for developing ELGs, the document is not intended to be a “how-to” manual. Rather, it has been designed to acknowledge that there are important decisions that must be made as ELGs are developed and refined. Now, based on amalgamated experience from many in the field, we have a body of knowledge that can inform and hopefully expedite other states’ efforts to develop or revise ELGs. Building on these collective experiences, we hope this document will make both the ELG processes and products more thoughtful, salient, useful, and germane for states.

Target Audience

The goal is to provide a resource that ELG committees can consult at the beginning of their development process, as they write and format their ELG document, and as they refine or revise their ELGs. Thinking through these issues will promote more effective decisions and make the ELG development process more efficient. We recognize that the writing/development process may not be as extensive for states that already have ELGs and are now revising them. We do, however, think that many of the issues raised in this document are germane, along with the issues raised specifically for states who are revising their ELGs. For states in the revision process, we recommend that someone from the leadership team review the issues raised in this document and use them to inform the planning process. Some issues discussed here will be more applicable in certain contexts than in others, but it is important for states to carefully think through the revision process just as it is for states writing ELGs for the first time.

We also feel that the issues raised in this document have merit for states working on both infant-toddler ELGs and preschool ELGs. While we recognize the qualitative differences between infant-toddlers and preschoolers and also differences between the programs/systems that serve children of different ages, we believe that there are commonalities in the types of issues that should be addressed when planning for ELGs. Therefore, we have presented issues that should be addressed, no matter what age range the ELGs target, followed by “age-specific” considerations that provide additional information that is particularly relevant for infant-toddler and/or preschool ELGs.

Organization

This document provides information for both states that are developing ELGs for the first time and for states that are revising their existing ELGs. Information targeted for states developing ELGs for the first time is presented in Section I. Section II addresses issues that states should think about as they revise their ELG document.

Summary of Section I: Writing ELG Documents

This section addresses two types of issues: (i) issues related to the *ELG document* and the ELGs themselves; and (ii) issues related to *resources* states use to write/develop the document. In each instance we raise issues for consideration, and in some cases we offer recommendations where our team and our national advisory committee felt that there is a recommended or “best” way to approach the issue. We do not, however, provide an in-depth description of how to carry out all of the steps or decisions addressed in this guide. Rather, we address a set of key issues, each of which has been deemed important to consider.

For each issue, we consider the following:

Issue:	An important topic/issue/key decision that should be considered/addressed either during the initial phase of the ELG development process or at various strategic points in the process.
Rationale:	An explanation for why it is important to consider this issue as part of the ELG development process.
Choices or Recommendations:	Options/alternate decisions that are viable OR recommendations for a specific choice/decision deemed to be the best option for ELG committees.
Considerations:	Factors that should be weighed or considered when analyzing a choice or recommendation related to the issue. Two types of considerations are presented: A. <i>General considerations</i> : Factors or issues that should be considered for both infant-toddler and preschool ELGs. B. <i>Age-specific considerations</i> : Considerations that may differ according to the age for which the ELGs are being written.
Related Issues:	Often decisions committees make regarding one issue have implications for decisions they might make regarding other issues. Issues listed in this “related issues” row could impact or be impacted by decisions a committee might make regarding the issue described in this section.

Summary of Section II: Revising ELG Documents

In Section II of this document, we present issues that committees charged with revising an existing ELG document should take into account. The issues that should be considered (or “reconsidered”) in the revision process are often similar to issues that states that are developing ELGs for the first time should consider. Readers are referred back to Section I for a more in-depth discussion of issues that are common between the ELG development and revision processes.

Section I: Writing ELG Documents

The ELG Document

Decisions made about the content and format of the ELG document early in the development process make it easier to write the document—these decisions provide clarity on what is being developed from the beginning of the process and support consistency across the different areas of the document. Moreover, the commitments made by the group early in the process will shape the commitments and principles articulated throughout the document. The committee should consider both the content and format of the total ELG document (the ELGs plus other materials included in the document) and the content of the ELGs specifically. Therefore, this section addresses considerations related to the content and format of the ELG document for both the full document and the ELGs themselves.

The ELG Document as a Whole

We begin by outlining the issues related to the ELG document as a whole—this includes the supplemental text that often accompanies ELGs. The ELGs themselves will be addressed in the next subsection of the document.

Issue: <i>Purpose and intended use(s) of the ELG document</i>	
Rationale:	<p>The purpose of the ELG document shapes plans for its content and format. Though the content of the actual ELGs would not vary with purpose, the content and format of supplemental materials within the document may vary according to the intended uses for the document.</p> <p>Examples of purposes that a state may have for the ELG document include one or more of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To guide teachers/caregivers in planning learning activities for children. b. To improve teachers'/caregivers' knowledge of child development. c. To assist teachers/caregivers in providing parents with information about child development. d. To inform or guide instructional assessments. e. To set goals for individual children in documents such as ISFPs and IEPs.
Recommendation:	States should think carefully about how they intend the document to be used and make plans for the entire ELG document (including supplemental materials) as they are developing the ELGs.
Considerations:	<p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> It is important for committee members to agree on the purpose of the document early in the process so everyone is working from a common point of reference. Lack of clarity on the purpose of the document can lead to a lack of consistency across various portions of the document as it is written.</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> States often have many purposes for their ELGs that are common to both ELGs for infants and toddlers and ELGs for preschool-age children: improving the quality of programs, providing guidance to teachers/caregivers on expectations for children's growth and development, promoting a more intentional approach to early childhood education, guiding instructional assessments, informing parents, etc. While these purposes are shared across ELGs for different age ranges, we recognize that states intend for ELGs written for preschoolers to be an integral part of an accountability system, but this may not be the case for ELGs written for infants and toddlers. If ELGs are intended to be the basis for an accountability system, it will be particularly important for the ELGs to have indicators that are clear, observable, and measurable.</p>
Related Issues:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Identifying the target audience B. Age range to be addressed within the ELGs C. Age groupings used within the ELGs D. Number and clarity of ELG items E. Agency leadership for the development process F. Stakeholder committees/workgroups

Issue: <i>Guiding Principles</i>	
Rationale:	Guiding Principles can serve as a foundation for the committee as they work on the ELG document. The principles reflect agreement on the beliefs and values that shape the work of the committee.
Recommendation:	Committees should develop Guiding Principles to address any or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Process for developing ELGs b. Content of the ELGs c. Uses of the ELGs
Considerations:	<p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> Guiding Principles should address issues specifically related to the development process and ELG content. The principles should affirm the committee’s beliefs regarding age-appropriate practices and respecting diverse cultures, languages, perspectives, and abilities. Though committees may find it difficult to directly address issues of culture, home language, and inclusion in the early stages of the process, experience has demonstrated that having open, honest discussions of how the ELGs can honor diverse cultures, languages, and abilities at the outset sets the stage for an inclusive process and an enriched document. Furthermore, principles should be written to communicate the committee’s beliefs in a way that clearly links the principle to the content and use of the ELGs. Principles that are “off topic” and principles that are too broad/vague are not helpful, and Guiding Principles that are too specific are not useful. Guiding Principles should be agreed upon early in the development process but may need to be revisited throughout the development process.</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> Committees may find that many Guiding Principles are the same for ELGs written for infants and toddlers and ELGs written for preschool-age children. There may, however, be some principles that are emphasized more for one age than the other. For instance, committees working on ELGs for infants and toddlers often are particularly sensitive to the importance of children’s home language and culture and relationships children develop with their caregivers; they may want to reflect this emphasis within their Guiding Principles.</p>
Related Issues:	<p>A. Age range to be addressed within the ELGs</p> <p>B. Domains and subject areas addressed by the ELGs</p>

Issue: <i>Identifying the target audience</i>	
Rationale:	Documents written for a specific target audience will be more effective.
Choices:	<p>States may select from a number of different audiences when they are developing their ELG document:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teachers/caregivers in specific program(s) b. Teachers/caregivers in center-based settings in general c. Providers in family childcare home settings d. Professionals who provide other services for children (such as special education professionals) e. Providers who serve specific populations of children, such as programs for migrant children f. Parents g. Policy makers
Considerations:	<p>Committees should give careful thought to the diverse backgrounds, education levels, general knowledge of child development, the responsibilities, and the support available for members of the target audience as they are writing the document. The reading level and the “level” of child development information in the document should match the characteristics of the target audience.</p> <p>ELGs can be useful to a wide variety of persons (such as teachers, parents, and policy makers), but it is typically more efficient to select a primary target audience for the ELG document. Committees may find that it is easier to write the ELG document with a primary target audience in mind (such as teachers) and then to plan to “package” the ELGs a bit differently for other target audiences. For instance, rather than trying to reach all audiences with one document, perhaps supplemental documents can be developed for specific target audiences, such as brief/one-page documents to explain the ELGs to parents and more detailed documents to present the ELGs to providers. If supplemental materials are developed, the content of the actual ELGs should not vary based on the audience for different documents but the type of information provided about the ELGs may be different in different supplemental documents developed for specific target audiences.</p>
Related Issues:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Purpose and intended use(s) of the ELG document B. Age range to be addressed within the ELGs C. Age groupings used within the ELGs D. Number and clarity of the ELGs E. Agency leadership for the development process F. Stakeholder committees/workgroups G. Dissemination of the ELG document H. Training/TA, professional development, and other support

Issue: <i>“Supplemental” sections of the document</i>	
Rationale:	States often include “supplemental” sections that provide additional information related to the ELGs within their ELG document.
Choices:	Supplemental materials can include an introduction, examples to illustrate what children might do relative to each ELG or indicator, teaching strategies/supportive practices, sections to address pertinent issues such as how to use the ELGs with children from diverse language and cultural backgrounds, and appendices to provide resources for persons using the document. Supplemental information that can support the use of the ELGs with specific populations of children may be particularly helpful. For instance, the ELG document could provide specific information on the development of English Language Learners (ELLs). The ELG document could also include information related to how ELL children might express competencies described within the ELGs in their home language. This type of supplemental information can help teachers and caregivers recognize that they can expect ELL children to demonstrate progress in the ELGs in their home language.
Considerations:	Too many supplemental materials within the document may take the reader’s focus away from the actual ELGs, but well-developed supplemental materials can be helpful. Also, if the same committee works on the ELGs and the supplemental materials, they may have less time to devote to writing the ELGs themselves and may find the process overwhelming, so division of labor is an important consideration when deciding what supplemental materials to include in the document and who should write them. Supplemental materials also increase the length of the document, and therefore can increase production costs.
Related Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Identifying the target audience B. Companion materials to accompany the ELG document C. Dissemination of the ELG document D. Training/TA, professional development, and other support

Issue: <i>Companion materials to accompany the ELG document</i>	
Rationale:	Teachers/caregivers may need additional guidance beyond what is included within the ELG document in order to use the ELGs effectively. Sometimes states find it useful to develop separate “companion” documents that support the use of the ELGs.
Choices:	States have developed a number of different types of companion documents to help caregivers use the ELGs. For instance, some states have developed curriculum materials, checklists and/or instructional assessments teachers can use to record children’s progress in the knowledge and skills described in the ELGs. Companion documents can also include posters for teachers/caregivers to display in their classroom/home, brief summaries of the ELGs designed to reach specific target audiences (e.g., one-page summaries for parents), and/or more detailed information about the ELGs (such as the research used as a basis for the ELGs or specific information on topics related to their content or use).
Considerations:	ELG committees should think carefully about the companion documents they elect to develop. While the documents can be very helpful in providing information on the ELGs to a specific target audience or for a specific purpose, they do require considerable work. It may be helpful to decide on the types of supplemental materials the committee would like to have and then work on them after the ELG document is completed. The costs associated with producing and printing companion materials should also be considered when planning for companion documents.
Related Issues:	A. “Supplemental” sections of the document B. Dissemination of the ELG document

Content of the ELGs

The next section addresses issues and considerations related to the content of the ELGs—the standards and indicators written to articulate expectations for children’s development.

Issue: <i>Age range to be addressed within the ELGs</i>	
Rationale:	The age range (or age span) to be addressed within the ELGs is one of the most important decisions a state makes about the ELGs. The range of ages covered in the ELGs determines the scope of the committee’s work and messages that will be communicated to providers about how services for children birth through five are configured.
Choices:	States typically write ELGs for birth to age three and three to five years, or birth through five years. Less typical age ranges (such as birth through age three) are sometimes addressed in ELGs if there are specific circumstances within the state that warrant a different approach to the age ranges addressed in the ELGs (for example, a state with existing ELGs for four-year-olds might elect to write ELGs for birth through age three to address the younger ages). States that elect to write ELGs for two or more separate age ranges may publish the different sets of ELGs in separate documents or as two sections of the same document.
Considerations:	<p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> Programs that serve children ages birth through five may find that ELGs written for birth through five promote consistency and communication across teachers/caregivers working with different ages. ELGs that match the state’s general age ranges within service-delivery systems will be used more easily within the field. However, if the agencies and persons involved believe that the state’s current service-delivery system is fragmented or should be configured differently, writing ELGs that address the birth through age five age range differently from the way in which current services do may be a starting point for systems-level changes in how the services for this age range are configured. Consideration should also be given to the extent to which having ELGs that address the full age range from birth through age five can promote continuity in what is expected of children across this age range. Providers also might find it useful to have all the expectations for birth through age five in one document so they can use the sections that address younger and/or older age ranges as a reference when working with children who are delayed or advanced for their age.</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> ELGs that address a broad age range promote continuity across the ages, yet including a broad age range in the ELGs may result in less attention being accorded each individual age addressed within the ELG document. ELG development committees may feel it is important to have an ELG document for just infants and toddlers (or birth through age three) in order to fully acknowledge the unique characteristics of this age population. The committee may feel the same about the need to communicate in-depth information regarding preschool-age children in an ELG document for ages three to five.</p>
Related Issues:	<p>A. Purpose and intended use(s) of the ELGs</p> <p>B. Identifying the target audience</p> <p>C. Age groupings used within the ELGs</p>

Issue: <i>Age groupings used within the ELGs</i>	
Rationale:	Once the <i>age range</i> to be addressed by the ELG document (e.g., birth to three years, birth through three years, birth through five years, etc.) is decided, <i>age groupings</i> must be determined. Typically committees must decide how to divide the age range into <i>age groupings</i> (i.e., how the document will be broken down by groupings within the age range). The age groupings should be decided early in the development process because they shape how the ELGs are written and formatted for use by teachers.
Choices:	Committees will need to determine if/how the broader age range will be broken down into age groupings. Resources that might be useful in making decisions about age groupings include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research b. Age groupings used in other documents or services within the state (such as childcare licensing, teacher licensing requirements, or Resource and Referral agencies) c. Examples from other states
Considerations:	<p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> Age groupings used in ELGs should not be so broad that caregivers/teachers have difficulty knowing how to use the document for the specific age with which they work. Groupings should also not be so narrow that they do not allow for age-appropriate individual differences among children (such as age groupings that break the age range down into one- or two-month groups). Age groupings used in other documents/services can be a guide for what age groups to use in the ELGs but should not automatically dictate what will be used in the ELG document—if the age groupings used in other documents/services do not seem appropriate, the ELG document can be a starting place for revising how development is subdivided within the state. States can also decide to present their ELGs in discrete age groupings or to have age groupings that overlap (such as birth to 12 months and 8 to 20 months). Overlapping age groupings can convey the message that the age at which children typically exhibit specific knowledge and skills can vary, as some children exhibit specified knowledge and skills at much earlier ages than others. Overlapping age groups are, however, less precise, which can be a disadvantage particularly if the ELGs are used as a basis for an assessment system.</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> Decisions about age groups are particularly important for infant-toddler ELGs because children’s growth and development, and the differences noted between children at different ages, are particularly pronounced during this age period. Committees will find many resources that describe distinct periods within the birth to three range. When deciding on the age groupings for birth to age three, careful consideration should be given to the developmental “shifts” that take place during this period and to how services for this age range are configured.</p>
Related Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Purpose and intended use(s) of the ELG document B. Identifying the target audience C. Age range to be addressed within the ELGs

Issue: <i>Domains and subject areas addressed by the ELGs</i>	
Rationale:	The domains are the broad areas of child development and learning that will be addressed in the ELGs. Subject areas reflect academic content areas. Decisions about the domain areas and subject areas included in the document can shape the degree to which the ELGs address all areas of learning and development.
Recommendation:	<p>ELGs should be holistic and should address all areas of development and learning, but the subareas used to articulate the areas of development may vary. Five commonly used domains include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Health and physical, perceptual and motor development b. Social and emotional development c. Approaches to learning d. Language and communication development e. Cognitive development <p>Academic subject areas are sometimes used as subcategories within the domain areas above and sometimes are “standalone” categories used to organize ELGs.</p>
Considerations:	<p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> ELG committees may want to consider what domains or subject areas are used in other standards within the state, and how areas of development are articulated in widely used curricula and assessments. It is also important to consider how the ELGs will communicate the integrated nature of learning and development. While ELGs may describe expectations for children’s learning and development in different domains, learning that takes place in one domain is related to/integrated with learning that takes place in other domains. ELG development committees should give careful consideration as to how the document will communicate the importance of the integrated nature of learning and development and the importance of an integrated approach to addressing the ELGs when working with young children. If the ELG document addresses more than one age group, ELG committees will also need to think about how to organize ELG content written for different domains—whether to organize the document by age grouping (and include each of the domains within an age group in one section) or by domain (and include the content from each age grouping within one section that addresses a specific domain).</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> The degree to which each of the five domains is emphasized may vary according to the age range addressed in the ELGs. Infant-toddler ELGs may place more emphasis on physical development and social-emotional development, while ELGs for older children may emphasize cognitive development and general knowledge more. Likewise, the degree to and manner in which the ELGs address academic subject areas should be different for infant-toddler versus preschool ELGs. Infant-toddler ELGs should focus on developmental skills and knowledge that are precursors for later academic content, while preschool ELGs may begin to introduce age-appropriate academic content.</p>
Related Issues:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Guiding Principles B. Stakeholder committees/workgroups C. Process for reviewing/analyzing draft content D. Training/TA, professional development, and other support

Issue: <i>The structure or number of “levels” within the ELGs</i>	
Rationale:	ELGs vary as to how they are structured or the number of “levels” within the document.
Choices:	ELGs can be structured differently. Some ELG documents have three “levels”: (i) a general statement of an expectation (sometimes called a <i>standard</i>); (ii) more precise statements that indicate various areas or developmental accomplishments related to the general statement that are observable and specific to the age being addressed (sometimes called <i>indicators</i>); and (iii) even more precise statements that describe specifically what a child can be observed doing that’s related to the middle-level statement (sometimes called <i>benchmarks</i> or <i>examples</i>). Some ELG documents have fewer levels, and a few states may have more than three “levels” within their ELG document.
Considerations:	<p>It is important to decide how the document will be structured or the number of levels that will be used early in the process so that the committee can write ELGs that are consistent across the sections of the document (i.e., the domains or age groupings). The decision on the number of levels used may be impacted by the degree to which the ELGs will be used as part of an accountability system (and therefore need to be stated more precisely) and the number of levels used in other standards documents within the state (if alignment is an important consideration).</p> <p>Once decisions are made about how the ELGs will be structured, it is important for each subcommittee working on a separate section of the document to write their section with the agreed upon number of levels. To make it easier for subcommittees to write their sections consistently, it may be helpful to create a template for the ELG document and agree that all subcommittees will use the template so that their work will be structured in the same way.</p>
Related Issues:	<p>A. Purpose and intended use(s) of the ELGs</p> <p>B. Stakeholder committees/workgroups</p> <p>C. Process for reviewing/analyzing draft content</p>

Issue: <i>Number and clarity of ELG items</i>	
Rationale:	Teachers/caregivers may be overwhelmed or find it difficult to use ELGs when the ELGs include an extremely large number of standards and/or indicators.
Recommendation:	Effective ELGs are parsimonious and are written in a way that is clear, observable, and easy to understand.
Considerations:	Children learn many skills, behaviors, and knowledge as they grow and develop. ELGs that try to address each and every element of children’s development and learning will be lengthy and difficult for teachers/caregivers to use. Likewise, vague ELGs that do not refer to observable aspects of children’s learning and development will be less useful to teachers/caregivers. ELG committees typically need to prioritize what should be addressed in ELGs in order to avoid including too many ELGs, and also, to target knowledge and behaviors that are important for children’s later success and observable.
Related Issues:	A. Identifying the target audience B. Process for reviewing/analyzing draft content

Issue: <i>Alignment of the ELGs with other documents</i>	
Rationale:	Alignment is a key component of effective early education and continuity in services provided to children across programs/systems and age/grade levels. In order to be maximally useful, the ELG document must align with other standards documents used for children younger and older than those covered in the ELGs. The ELGs should also align with other materials used in conjunction with the development of young children, such as the curricula and assessments used with the age range addressed by the ELGs.
Recommendation:	Those involved in the development of the ELGs should have a solid knowledge of other standards documents that pertain to children younger and older than those covered by the ELGs being developed. They should also be aware of other documents (e.g., curricula and assessments) being used for the children who will be covered by the ELGs being developed and should systematically analyze the alignment between draft ELGs and other documents before the content of ELGs is finalized.
Considerations:	<p>A. <i>General Considerations:</i> If the ELGs are being developed and there are no standards for younger and older children, then vertical alignment is not necessary. In most situations, however, there will be existing standards or ELGs, such as standards for kindergarten-age children, which should be considered when developing pre-kindergarten ELGs. In these cases, those involved with the development of the ELGs should have an understanding of existing ELGs and standards, and should make some judgment regarding their appropriateness for the intended age group. If they are deemed appropriate, then the ELGs to be developed should align with them. If they are not appropriate for their intended age group or if they do not represent all domains of development, then the new ELGs should be developed using the knowledge and skills of those involved in the process. Moreover, the emerging ELGs need to be horizontally aligned with the other materials in use for the age group including curricula and assessments. If these are deemed comprehensive, appropriate, and not in need of revision, then the ELGs should align with them.</p> <p>The process of alignment is quite technical and involves a thorough analysis of existing documents. Alignment involves more than a simple matching; it must take balance, breadth, depth, and difficulty of the documents into consideration. In most cases, an alignment analysis is carried out by technical experts before the new ELGs are finalized.</p>
Related Issues:	<p>A. Contractors to support the development process</p> <p>B. Process for reviewing/analyzing draft content</p>

The ELG Development Process

Developing ELGs is a relatively time- and resource-intensive process. This section of the document addresses issues related to the ELG development process. The first set of issues in this section addresses the resources needed to write ELGs. Next we discuss how ELGs should be reviewed before they are finalized. Thinking through various elements of the development process and available resources can result in a more effective and efficient development process.

Resources for the ELG development process

Writing ELGs is a resource-intensive process. This section addresses the personnel, financial, and time resources used in the ELG development process.

Issue: <i>Agency leadership for the development process</i>	
Rationale:	Decisions about which agencies will take leadership for the project have implications for resources available for the ELG development process, for how the document will be disseminated, and for supports to promote the use of the document.
Choices:	The project may fall under the auspice of one agency, may be the primary responsibility of one agency with support from other agencies, or may be jointly sponsored by more than one agency (such as the department of human resources/human services, the department of education, etc.).

<p>Agency Leadership Considerations:</p>	<p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> The agency with the greatest vested interest in the document/responsibilities for the target audience may want to take the lead; however, it may be useful for the project to be a collaborative effort to provide greater expertise for the process and/or “buy in” or legitimacy for the product. Some states opt for one agency to take the lead and have other agencies represented in the process; others opt for collaborative leadership that involves more than one agency, and some decide to create a collaborative entity that is separate from the agencies involved (a workgroup) but includes representatives from the respective agencies involved. Another option is for a nongovernmental organization to take the lead, creating a neutral entity that can foster collaboration across various systems. Having one agency take the lead may facilitate a more efficient development process, while a joint effort between two or more agencies or a collaborative workgroup may increase the “buy in” within the state and bring additional resources for the development and implementation of the document. Irrespective of which agency leads the effort, care must be taken to ensure that the process is inclusive and that individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and disciplines are involved.</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> Agencies may vary in their investment in services for a particular age group and/or experience/credibility with the target audience for the ELG document. For instance, the department of human services may work more closely with childcare providers and have more experience with infant-toddler providers, while the department of education may work more closely with pre-kindergarten programs. For infants and toddlers, it is particularly important that the leadership for the ELG project reflect the various disciplines that serve infants and toddlers. The agency/agencies that oversee health services and special education services should be deeply involved in development of the ELG document, and it may be appropriate for these agencies to take the lead in the development process. For preschool-age children, it may be more appropriate for the agency that administers the pre-kindergarten program to take the lead, particularly if pre-kindergarten programs will be required to use the ELGs. Decisions regarding which agency/agencies should take the lead in the ELG development process should be made with some consideration for the age range that will be addressed in the ELGs and the agency/agencies that have the clearest connection to the target audience.</p>
<p>Related Issues:</p>	<p>A. Purpose and intended use(s) of the ELG document</p> <p>B. Identifying the target audience</p> <p>C. Designated personnel to manage the ELG development process</p> <p>D. Financing the development and production of the document</p> <p>E. Endorsement/adoption by agencies and organizations</p>

Issue: <i>Designated personnel to manage the ELG development process</i>	
Rationale:	The ELG development process will be implemented more efficiently and will produce a higher quality product when there are designated personnel responsible for managing the development process.
Recommendation:	<p>It is essential that the ELG project has designated personnel who are responsible for planning and managing the development process. It may be helpful for this function to be carried out by a small group or team of individuals. This management team should include members of the lead agency/agencies who have direct responsibility/authority for the development process and it may be helpful to also include persons who will be responsible for implementing the document once it is finished (which may be the same individuals).</p> <p>Responsibilities for the core management team can include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Developing and implementing plans for the project (including both logistics of the meetings/process and decisions made during the process). b. Engaging and supervising contractors or consultants who may work on the project. c. Writing draft ELG content and collecting feedback from the larger committee if the state elects to use a smaller writing team to draft the ELGs. d. Communicating with stakeholder groups and committee members. e. Implementing a process to review the draft document. f. Keeping agency head(s) informed on the progress of the project. g. Monitoring the budget and other resources.
Considerations:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. <i>General considerations:</i> A smaller core management team may be more efficient, but a larger team may be better suited to provide the expertise needed and may more effectively “set the stage” for implementation of the document because more people are involved in the development process. B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> It is important for the management team to include one or more individuals who have technical expertise related to the age for which the ELGs are being written and for the target audience. For infant-toddler ELGs in particular, the team should be multidisciplinary and should include persons who are knowledgeable of all domains of development.
Related Issues:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Agency leadership for the development process B. Allocation of staff time C. Financing the development and production of the document D. Timeframe for the development process

Issue: <i>Allocation of staff time</i>	
Rationale:	Sufficient staff time must be dedicated to the project to ensure that it will be completed.
Choices:	Depending on the role of agency staff, the development process can require substantial staff time. Some states have elected to spread staffing responsibilities across multiple staff members, while others elect to designate one or two persons responsible for the development process. The degree to which contractors are involved in the process can also impact the amount of staff time required for the project, particularly if contractors are engaged to carry out a substantial portion of the work (such as writing portions of the document).
Considerations:	The amount of staff time dedicated to the project depends somewhat on the role the persons will play in the development process and the expertise they bring to the project but should not be underestimated.
Related Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Designated personnel to manage the ELG development process B. Financing the development and production of the document

Issue: <i>Stakeholder committees/workgroups</i>	
Rationale:	Stakeholder input into the ELGs strengthens the content of the ELGs and increases the likelihood that there will be “buy in” for the document among practitioners.
Recommendation:	States should engage a stakeholder committee to assist with the development process.
Considerations:	<p>In planning for the stakeholder committee, states have several choices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Role of the committee:</i> The role of the committee can range from providing advice/guidance on the content of the document to actually writing the ELGs and/or other sections of the document. If stakeholder committees are involved in writing the ELGs, the group typically is broken down into smaller workgroups or subcommittees that address specific topics in order to make the writing process more efficient. It may be helpful to have committee members to chair/co-chair the workgroups/subcommittees and to assign a person from the leadership team to staff each of the workgroups/subcommittees. b. <i>Decision-making authority of the committee:</i> The degree to which the stakeholder committee has the authority or “final say” in decisions about the ELGs varies from state to state. The lead agency may consider the committee to be an advisory committee and, therefore, maintain most of the decision-making authority for the document. State agencies may elect to make select decisions about the document (such as who the target audience is, the purpose of the document, the domains that will be used, etc.) and grant the

**Stakeholder
Committee
Considerations
(continued)**

committee decision-making authority for other decisions. Or state agencies may choose to have the stakeholder group make all decisions about the document. Lead agencies should clearly communicate the level of decision-making authority that committees have and specify which decisions will be made by the agency/leadership team to the stakeholder committee early in the development process. The state agency should communicate the extent to which committee decisions are considered to be final or binding versus those that are advisory.

- c. *Composition of the committee:* One of the key functions of the committee is to ensure that different perspectives are represented during the development process, and a second function is to facilitate broad-based “buy in” for the document. Stakeholder committees play a vital role in ensuring that the content of the document is appropriate for diverse children served within the state. Therefore it is important that the committee include members who represent different perspectives, ranging from content experts to representatives from the target audiences. When forming the committee, states should give particular consideration to ensuring that the development process includes persons from groups that traditionally have been underrepresented in policymaking such as English Language Learners, children and families in poverty, and specific cultural groups who live in the state. Family members of children with disabilities can also make important contributions to the effort. It is important that persons who will be responsible for implementing the document are included in the development process and that persons with expertise related to children with disabilities are included. Examples of constituencies that can be represented on the committee include:
- i. Staff from the lead agency/agencies who are not part of the core management team (such as content experts from within the department of education)
 - ii. Faculty from institutions of higher education
 - iii. Resource and Referral agency staff
 - iv. Training and technical assistance providers
 - v. Staff from the QRIS (if the state has one) or other agencies that might incorporate the ELGs into program requirements
 - vi. Administrators and teachers from early care and education programs
 - vii. Family childcare providers
 - viii. Parents and other family members
 - ix. Representatives from agencies with content expertise (such as the health department)
 - x. Persons with expertise in the development of children from diverse backgrounds (children with disabilities, English Language Learners, children from limited-income families, etc.)
 - xi. Resource persons who work with families (such as pediatricians, librarians, etc.)
 - xii. Policymakers
- d. *Size of the committee:* Some states elect to convene a relatively small workgroup/committee while others create larger committees (some

<p>Stakeholder Committee Considerations (continued)</p>	<p>with 50 or more people).</p> <p>e. <i>Mechanism for coordinating work within the committee:</i> It is important to specify how work will be coordinated within the committee. If the committee will be broken down into workgroups, the leadership team should clearly specify what content each workgroup will address, which parts of the document each group will work on (i.e., Are they just writing ELGs, or are they writing ELGs plus supporting materials within the document?), how decisions that affect all workgroups will be made, and a process for coordinating and approving the work of individual workgroups within the full committee. It is also helpful to set up a mechanism to ensure that the final product is consistent and coherent, particularly if different workgroups are writing individual sections of the document. It is important to agree upon the format for the document early in the process so that there will be consistency in what the workgroups develop. States find it helpful to provide each workgroup with a template to fill out so that the different sections of the document do not have to be reformatted when the sections are put together into one document. In states using stakeholder groups to write the ELGs, it may be helpful to engage a writer/editor to make changes/suggestions to increase the consistency and coherence of what the different workgroups write.</p> <p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> Larger committees are less efficient and require additional staff and fiscal resources, but offer greater possibilities for different perspectives to be considered during the development process, and increase the number of persons available to support the dissemination of the ELG document. Work can also continue in larger committees even if one or more committee members must be absent from a committee meeting. Smaller groups are more efficient, and individual members may have more commitment to/investment in the project. Alternative means for gathering stakeholder input from different groups, such as surveys and focus groups, can be used if the state elects to have a smaller ELG writing committee but wants to include a wide variety of viewpoints in the development process.</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> It is important the committee include persons with deep understanding of the particular age group being addressed. For infant-toddler ELG work it may be helpful to include greater representation from the medical community, IDEA Early Intervention, home-visitation programs, family childcare providers, and others who work closely with families of infants and toddlers. In committees working on preschool-age ELGs, it is important to make sure that the state’s pre-kindergarten program (if there is one) is represented and that the committee includes persons from IDEA 619/Part B programs, and kindergarten programs.</p>
<p>Related Issues:</p>	<p>A. Purpose and intended use(s) of the document</p> <p>B. Identifying the target audience</p> <p>C. Designated personnel to manage the ELG development process</p> <p>D. Allocation of staff time</p> <p>E. Financing the development and production of the document</p> <p>F. Timeframe for the development process</p>

Issue: <i>Contractors to support the development process</i>	
Rationale:	Some states have found it useful to contract with entities or individuals to assist in the development process.
Choices:	<p>Contractors can play one or more of the following roles in the development process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Planning the development process:</i> A contractor may be involved in helping the lead agency conceptualize how the ELG development process will work (who will be involved, roles for persons involved, timeframes, etc.). The contractor might serve in an advisory role during the planning process or might be responsible for leading the planning process. b. <i>Facilitating the process:</i> A contractor may facilitate the development process, serving as a member of the leadership team and taking the lead during committee meetings. c. <i>Writing the document:</i> Contractors can be involved in various ways during the writing process, ranging from compiling and editing the work of the development committee (with little leeway in terms of content) to writing the document with guidance from the agency and/or the development committee. d. <i>Conducting a research and/or validation process:</i> Contractors may be retained to complete a process to validate the content of draft ELG documents (by compiling or conducting research related to the various ages and areas addressed in the ELGs). e. <i>Gathering stakeholder feedback:</i> Contractors may be engaged to convene stakeholder groups and/or staff a stakeholder-review process once a workgroup has developed a draft ELG document. f. <i>Reviewing the content:</i> Individuals and/or agencies may be retained as a contractor to review a draft ELG document and provide feedback.

<p>Use of Contractors Considerations:</p>	<p>Engaging contractors to fulfill one or more of the roles described above can be very helpful. Using contractors often is more efficient and means that persons with significant expertise are available to assist in the development process. If a state agency elects to engage contractors in the ELG development process, the persons involved should be knowledgeable about the age for which the ELGs are being written, and it is helpful if the contractor also has considerable expertise related to cultural competence, dual language development, and/or services for children with disabilities. Considerations regarding if (and if so, how) contractors will be involved in the process include the fiscal resources required and the degree to which the agency and/or workgroup/committee developing the document may have a less direct involvement in developing the content of the document if contractors take the lead for the project. Agencies developing ELGs should also consider the assets contractors bring to the process, the role(s) contractors can play that would be most beneficial for the process, and the resources available to support the development process. If the lead state agency elects to engage contractor(s) and/or consultant(s): staff should be assigned to oversee the contractor’s work; the authority and process for decision-making related to the document should be specified (i.e., the role of the lead agency/agencies, the ELG committee, and the contractor in making decisions about the content and format of the document); and a mechanism for ongoing communication between the contractor and the lead agency/agencies should be established. Deliverables and deadlines should also be clearly specified.</p>
<p>Related Issues:</p>	<p>A. Allocation of staff time B. Financing the development and production of the document C. Timeframe for the development process</p>

Issue: <i>Financing the development process and production of the document</i>	
Rationale:	It is important that sufficient resources are available to support the development process as well as implementation of the ELGs. Careful planning is needed to ensure that sufficient resources are available.
Recommendation:	<p>A budget should be developed for the project and should include all anticipated expenses for developing and producing the ELG document. Examples of expenses include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Staff time b. Logistical arrangements for committee/agency work on the document (meetings, communication, sharing drafts, travel) c. Contractors d. Honoraria for committee members and/or reviewers e. Production process (editing, design, and layout of the document) f. Printing and dissemination costs (including printing and reprinting for the ELG document and any supplemental materials as well as costs for mailing the document).
Considerations:	<p>The lead agency typically will provide at least a portion of the funds necessary for the project, but may also tap funding and in-kind resources from other sources. Examples of the types of funding sources used in states include: state-funded prekindergarten program, Title I, Even Start, IDEA programs, Head Start Collaboration Office, quality enhancement funds from CCDF, Resource and Referral agencies, etc. Private foundations may also be interested in financing some portion of the ELG development process.</p> <p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> Depending on how the development process is implemented, the budget for the project can vary. Some states rely more on in-house staff to carry out the work, and the designated budget for the project may be relatively small (i.e., staff time may be contributed without being reflected in the budget). While other states rely heavily on contractors, have large committees, etc., and have a large budget. The design, layout, and production costs for the document will be heavily dependent on the type of document the state plans to produce (large versus small, use of color and pictures versus black and white, etc.).</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> Funding and in-kind support for the project may come from different sources depending upon the age range being addressed in the ELGs. For example, development of infant-toddler ELGs may be more heavily supported by the state’s Child Care Administrator, while the state’s pre-kindergarten program may provide more support for the development of preschool-age ELGs. Foundations and other organizations with particular interest in specific age ranges may be more likely to support the development of ELGs for a specific age range. National organizations with expertise and investment in specific age ranges, such as Zero to Three, may be more heavily involved in supporting the development process for ELGs that target a specific age level. State agencies should think through all the various programs and sources of support for the particular age range targeted in their ELGs and garner support from as many sources as needed or as possible.</p>

Financing Related Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Agency leadership for the development process B. Designated personnel to manage the ELG development process C. Allocation of staff time D. Stakeholder committees/workgroups E. Contractors to support the development process F. Timeframe for the development process G. Process for reviewing/analyzing draft content
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Issue: <i>Timeframe for the development process</i>	
Rationale:	Development of ELG documents is time-intensive, so it is helpful to estimate the amount of time that will be required to complete the project and to develop a timeline for the work.
Recommendation:	Develop (and meet) an agreed upon and realistic timeline that allows sufficient time for committee deliberations, writing, stake-holder feedback, analyses, and formatting the document.
Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. <i>General considerations:</i> Some states have a predetermined timeframe for completing the development process that is mandated by policymakers or an agency; others have a pressing need in the field for the document that may necessitate a shorter development process; and others have a more open-ended timeframe for completing the document. The majority of states have taken at least one year to complete their document, while the development process has spanned several years in some states. A shorter process may facilitate a more focused effort, which can enhance consistency across the document. A longer process may allow for greater stakeholder input and for greater representation of diverse perspectives, may incorporate more thorough analyses/review of draft content, and may require less staff time on a monthly basis. The funding and other resources available to support the project can also impact the timeline, particularly if funding is available only during a specific budget period or if the amount of funding is insufficient to support a lengthy development process. B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> The timeframe for developing the ELG document will depend on the number of domains that are included, the age range addressed, and the number of age groupings used within the document. ELGs that address more domains and include a broader age range (i.e., birth through age five) will require a longer development process than those that address a more narrow age range.
Related Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Designated personnel to manage the ELG development process B. Allocation of staff time C. Stakeholder committees/workgroups D. Examples from other states' ELG documents E. Process for reviewing/analyzing draft content

Issue: <i>Examples from other states' ELG documents</i>	
Rationale:	States often find it helpful to look at examples of ELG documents developed by another state when they are developing their own ELGs.
Recommendation:	ELG documents from other states can be used as reference materials during the ELG development process. ELG committees often find it useful to look at other states' ELG documents to get ideas on what areas of development other states addressed, how they structured their ELGs, etc.
Considerations:	The extent to which committees use examples from other states varies. Some states simply look through other ELG documents for ideas, others have taken larger sections of another state's ELG document and adapted them for their own purpose, and a few states have adopted large portions or all of another state's ELG document. It is more efficient to use ELGs from another state. When using exemplars from another state, however, it is important to make sure that the ELGs that are developed reflect the uniqueness of the state where they will be used. Wholesale adoption of another state's ELG document without some process for involving stakeholders in a careful examination and agreement upon the content may result in less stakeholder "buy-in" for the document. If examples or large portions of another state's ELGs are used, committees should carefully consider any adaptations that are necessary to ensure that the ELGs reflect the unique context and characteristics of the target audience for which the committee is writing their state's ELGs. Portions of another state's ELGs used in an ELG document should be cited appropriately and/or used with permission from the authoring state.
Related Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Age range to be addressed within the ELGs B. Age groupings used within the ELGs C. Domains and subject areas addressed by the ELGs D. Number and clarity of ELG items E. The structure or number of "levels" within the ELGs F. Allocation of staff time G. Financing the development and production of the document H. Timeframe for the development process

ELG Review Process

It is important that ELG documents provide credible and useful information. This section describes issues to consider when planning how an ELG document will be reviewed before being finalized.

Issue: <i>Process for reviewing/analyzing draft content</i>	
Rationale:	Because the ELG document will be used to define expectations for children’s development and learning, it is important to ensure that the content is appropriate and the document communicates the content as clearly as possible.
Recommendation:	<p>States should conduct a thorough review/analysis of the draft content of the ELGs to ensure that it is age appropriate, developmentally significant, and appropriate for children from diverse backgrounds. Several different types of review/analysis processes can be conducted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>Expert review:</i> Solicit reviews from individuals and/or agencies with content expertise in order to gather feedback for improvements that can be made to the draft document. Reviewers should include persons who have knowledge of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and of cultural competence frameworks. Reviewers should also include persons who have experience working with children with disabilities.b. <i>Age-appropriateness evaluation:</i> Implement a formal process to gauge the extent to which the ELGs are written at the appropriate level for the age groups. It is important to determine whether the ELGs are age appropriate for the children with whom the document will be used. States might elect to conduct a review of research literature to determine if the specific knowledge and skills described in the ELGs are age appropriate. Alternatively, states might elect to conduct an age-validation study that collects data from children within the state to determine if the expectations articulated in the ELGs are age appropriate. The age-validation study is more scientific and will yield quantitative data that can be used to recalibrate the ELGs in instances where they may have been too “low” or too “high” in terms of the expectations articulated for children at different ages. States that conduct an age-validation study will have more confidence that the ELGs are age appropriate for the particular children being served in their own state.c. <i>Content analyses:</i> Use a systematic process to analyze the content of the draft ELGs.d. <i>Alignment analyses:</i> Use a systematic process to analyze the degree to which the content of the draft ELGs is consistent with the curricula and assessments used for this age (horizontal alignment) and/or consistent with the state’s standards for children of other ages (vertical alignment).

<p>Review Process Considerations:</p>	<p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> The number and type of reviews/analyses needed is somewhat determined by the intended use of the document. ELGs that are intended to be part of an accountability system require a greater number of and more sophisticated analyses. The degree to which the review/analysis is needed to validate the content and/or lend credibility to the document, the timeframe of the development process, and the level of funding available to support review/analysis activities should also be considered when determining what type of review/analysis to conduct. The persons involved in an expert review and/or ELG analysis process should be knowledgeable of the age range that the ELGs address and of issues that are particularly salient for the age. Research used to conduct age appropriateness reviews should be focused on the specific age range addressed in the ELGs and should include both the most recent studies available as well as seminal works, even if they are not the most current research. The review process should include consideration of important issues such as the influence that family, culture, and relationships have on children.</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> The review/analysis process will be similar for ELGs written for infants and toddlers and ELGs written for preschoolers. It is, however, important to take the unique characteristics of the particular age range into consideration when planning and carrying out the review/analysis process. For instance, reviews/analyses conducted on ELGs for infants and toddlers may pay closer attention to issues related to children’s physical development and may place particular emphasis on attachment and the importance of developing trusting relationships with caregivers. A review/analysis of preschool ELGs might place emphasis on a child’s transition to formal schooling and research related to children’s later success in school.</p>
<p>Related Issues:</p>	<p>A. Age range to be addressed in the ELG document B. Domains and subject areas addressed by the ELGs C. Number and clarity of the ELG items D. Allocation of staff time E. Contractors to support the development process F. Financing the development and production of the document G. Timeframe for the development process</p>

<p>Issue: <i>Plans for ongoing review and updating the ELGs</i></p>	
<p>Rationale:</p>	<p>ELG documents should not be considered “set in stone.” New research provides greater insights into how children grow and learn, and changes in the programs serving young children within the state may necessitate changes in the ELGs.</p>
<p>Recommendation:</p>	<p>States should plan to review and update their ELGs on a regular basis.</p>
<p>Considerations:</p>	<p>The period between reviews/updates should be long enough to allow the ELG document to be fully disseminated and widely used in the field for a significant amount of time but should not be so long that the document becomes dated. Three to five years seems to be the typical amount of time between reviews/revisions of ELG documents. States should set a target timeframe for the next review/revision process at the time that the document is developed.</p>
<p>Related Issues:</p>	<p>Section II: Revising ELG Documents</p>

Planning for the Implementation Process

Given the significant investment in writing ELG documents, committees want to be sure that they do everything possible to encourage early educators to use the documents. Planning for how the documents will be disseminated and what supports will be available to help early educators use them should be an important part of the planning process. This section describes issues related to implementation of ELG documents.

Issue: <i>Endorsement/adoption by agencies and organizations</i>	
Rationale:	It may be helpful to have the document endorsed/adopted by other agencies and organizations to lend additional credibility to the document and to facilitate its use in the field.
Choices:	Organizations that a state may elect to have adopt/endorse the document include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Boards or other groups charged with oversight for the agency that developed the document b. Other state agencies c. State-level professional organizations
Considerations:	<p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> Consideration should be given to any adoptions/endorsements that might be desirable. It is important to communicate with these entities early in the process to determine the degree to which they would need to be involved in the development process in order to adopt/endorse the document, the timeframe for their endorsement/adoption process, the process that would be used, and information that would be needed to complete the process. The lead agency should consider the “level” of endorsement needed from various agencies/organizations. Formal approval of the document can range from endorsement from an agency/organization that does not have authority to direct programs to use the document (i.e., a “seal of approval” for the document) to adoption by an agency or organization that has authority to require that programs use the document (such as a state board of education that can require programs to use the document). The agency developing the document should also consider whether the adoption/endorsement should come before the document is published (so it can be noted in the document itself) or after, and the degree to which the process will (or will not) affect the timeframe for making the document available to the public.</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> It may be important to consider which agencies/organizations are most important, given the particular ages addressed in the ELGs. Within a state, it may be important to seek endorsement from particular agencies/organizations that have more expertise/credibility with service providers working with infants and toddlers or with preschool-age children. For instance, endorsement from a family childcare association may be particularly important for ELGs written for infants and toddlers, while endorsement from the state board of education may be particularly important for preschool-age ELGs.</p>
Related Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Identifying the target audience B. Agency leadership for the for the development process C. Dissemination of the ELG document D. Use of the document within other systems in the state

Issue: <i>Dissemination of the ELG document</i>	
Rationale:	The ultimate goal for developing ELGs is for them to be used within programs—for teachers/caregivers to incorporate them into their daily activities rather than set them on a shelf. Therefore, plans for disseminating the document are important considerations during the development process.
Recommendation:	A dissemination plan should be developed early (not “tagged on” at the end of the development process).
Considerations:	<p>A. <i>General considerations:</i> States have used a variety of mechanisms to disseminate ELG documents, including direct mailings to programs, posting the document on the internet, and disseminating the document during training sessions. Plans for how the document will be disseminated may be important considerations during the formatting process. For instance, documents that will be disseminated electronically may need to be shorter and have fewer pictures than documents that will be disseminated primarily in print form.</p> <p>B. <i>Age-specific considerations:</i> Plans for dissemination of the document should take the unique characteristics of the target audience into consideration. Different types of outreach may be needed for infant-toddler providers and for preschool service providers.</p>
Related Issues:	<p>A. Identifying the target audience</p> <p>B. Endorsement/adoption by agencies and organizations</p> <p>C. Use of the document within other systems in the state</p>

Issue: <i>Training/TA, professional development, and other support</i>	
Rationale:	Significant resources and support are needed to promote effective use of ELGs. States should not underestimate the amount of training and professional development needed, the usefulness of companion documents to support teacher/providers in using the document, or the need to incorporate the document into multiple systems and policy setting entities in order for it to be used in the field.
Recommendation:	States should invest significant resources to support teachers/caregivers and programs as they use the ELG document. Support for use of the ELGs should be part of the state’s overall Training and Technical Assistant Plan and should be incorporated into all efforts to promote high-quality practices. There should be an agency/committee responsible for funding and implementing training and support specifically related to the ELGs, and the ELGs should also be incorporated into training and technical assistance that are not solely designed to promote the use of ELGs so teachers/caregivers understand the implications of the ELGs for all areas of their practices. Planning for the training and support should receive considerable attention during the ELG development process.
Considerations:	It may be helpful to think of the training/support on different levels in order to meet the needs of a target audience. The first level of training/support is often called “awareness” and is directed at teachers/caregivers who simply need to become more familiar with the document (to learn that it exists, what is included, and how they might use it). The second level provides more in-depth training/support on how to use the document in planning daily activities, communicating with parents, etc. Finally, states should offer training and support for persons who provide professional development to teachers/caregivers. This includes Resource and Referral staff and others who provide training and technical assistance, as well as higher education faculty. It is important that these persons are knowledgeable of the document and how to help teachers/caregivers learn to use it. States may find it helpful to provide both training/professional development and technical assistance, coaching, and mentoring in the classroom/home setting. The training and support should specifically address how to use the ELGs with children from different cultural and language backgrounds and with children with diverse ability levels.
Related Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Identifying the target audience B. “Supplemental” sections of the document C. Companion materials to accompany the document D. Dissemination of the ELG document

Issue: <i>Use of the document within other systems in the state</i>	
Rationale:	The ELG document will have greater impact on the quality of services if it is infused into/used by multiple early childhood systems within the state.
Recommendation:	Development committees should consider how the ELG document can be infused into other systems within the state (i.e., the QRIS, higher education, early childhood programs, etc.).
Considerations:	Many agencies and systems are involved in providing and/or supporting early childhood services. The ELG document should be viewed as a shared vision for the child outcomes that these systems and programs are trying to promote. Therefore it is important that the document be used in different systems, although the way the document is used may vary. It is also important to consider the incentives that can be used to encourage providers and programs to use the document. For instance, an agency that provides grants to programs might require programs to specify how they will use the ELG document as part of their grant applications. The QRIS might require programs to document that staff has been trained on the ELGs as part of the rating system.
Related Issues:	A. Agency leadership for the development process B. Endorsement/adoption by agencies and organizations C. Dissemination of the ELG document

Issue: <i>Monitoring the use of the ELGs</i>	
Rationale:	The state has invested resources to develop the ELGs and provide support for the use of the ELGs. A monitoring system that checks on the degree to which the ELGs are being used ensures that providers are more likely to actually use the documents.
Choices:	The degree to which programs are held accountable for using the ELGs and the method of monitoring the use of the ELGs can vary from state to state (and program to program within a state). Providers might be required to document that they have used the ELGs in developing lesson plans, etc. Alternatively, child assessment data might be collected to determine if children are making progress on the areas articulated in the ELGs.
Considerations:	The type of monitoring and level of accountability for the use of the ELGs depends on the authority that the lead agency has to require providers to use the document. In some cases, the state may require certain programs to use the document, while use of the ELGs may be voluntary in other programs.
Related Issues:	A. Agency leadership for the development process B. Endorsement/adoption by agencies and organizations C. Dissemination of the ELG document

Section II: Revising ELG Documents

This section describes considerations that are particularly applicable for states that are in the process of revising an existing ELG document. Because states that have previously developed ELGs often have considerable experience with their ELG document and with the ELG development process, we do not offer an extended discussion of each of the issues in this section. We do, however, encourage readers to refer back to the more extensive discussion of topics provided in Section I if they have questions or if it would be helpful to consider specific topics in more depth.

It is important for ELGs to be reviewed and revised periodically. The revision process is qualitatively and quantitatively different from the original process of writing the document, and may not be as time- or resource-intensive as the original development process. Even so, the revision process should be approached thoughtfully, and there are important issues to consider that can make the revision process more efficient. Some issues (such as the lead agency for the process) may be a “given” since the document already exists. Others may warrant consideration as you revise the document.

In summary, the ELG revision process provides an opportunity to revisit earlier decisions and to make new decisions that persons involved in the original ELG development process may not have considered. We recommend that states revising ELGs “think through” issues/considerations related to the ELG document, resources needed for the revision process, and the implementation process for the revised document.

The ELG Document

When revising an ELG document, states may need to examine several issues related to the document as a whole and the content of the ELGs themselves. Issues to consider include the following:

Why are the ELGs being revised?

- Carefully think through the rationale for revising the ELGs. There are a number of reasons why a state may decide to revise ELGs. For example, the state may decide to update the ELGs on a regular schedule (such as every three to five years) or on a schedule that is consistent with the schedule for revising other educational documents (such as the K–12 standards). Perhaps the document should be revised because of new developments within the field. New research is published each year that sheds light on children’s development and learning, so ELGs should be revised to reflect current theory and research. There may also be new developments on the national or state level (such as the revision of the Head Start Child Outcome Framework or the state’s own Kindergarten standards) that warrant a fresh look at the existing ELGs. ELGs may also need to be revised because specific areas have been identified as weaknesses as the document has been used in the field or because the early childhood services within the state have been reconfigured. They may need to be revised to assure that they are well aligned with other

documents within the state. In sum, revising ELGs on a regular basis can ensure that they are current and can be used effectively in the field.

Related Issue:

- [Plans for ongoing review and updating the ELGs](#)

Has the primary purpose/intended use of the ELGs or the target audience changed?

- The intended use of the ELGs and target audience for the ELG document may have been clearly established at the time the ELGs were initially written, or there may have been questions at that time about how the document would be used and about the target audience for the document. The revision process is the time to reconsider how the state intends the document to be used and by whom, and to update the document so that it is more user-friendly for the target audience.

Related Issues:

- [Purpose and intended use\(s\) of the ELG document](#)
- [Identifying the target audience](#)

Does the organization of the current document seem to work well?

- When the original ELG document was written, the development team/committee made important decisions about the age range, age groupings, domains, and the structure/number of levels used in the document. It may be worthwhile to reconsider these decisions during the revision process. For example, is the organizational structure of the document consistent with other documents currently being used in the field (such as standards for teachers' professional competencies or ELG documents for other ages)? Does the structure of the document match the current structure of the service-delivery system (for instance, do the childcare licensing standards use the same age groupings as the ELG document)? If there are noticeable discrepancies or feedback from users indicates that changes are needed in the organizational structure of the document, the revision process provides an opportunity to address these issues.

Related Issues:

- [Age range to be addressed within the ELGs](#)
- [Age groupings used within the ELGs](#)
- [Domains and subject areas addressed by the ELGs](#)
- [The structure or number of "levels" within the ELGs](#)

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the content of the current ELG document?

- It is important to conduct formal analyses of the content of the existing ELG document to identify strengths, weaknesses, and linkages/alignment with other documents currently being used in the field. States that are revising their ELGs should look back at how the document was reviewed/analyzed during the original development process and decide

what type of review/analysis would be most helpful to guide the revision process. If the original draft was not thoroughly reviewed/analyzed, it will be very useful to conduct a review/analysis before the revision process is started. Even if a thorough review/analysis was conducted as part of the original development process, it may still be useful to conduct additional reviews/analyses of the content. New research may be available and a review could provide some indication as to how the ELGs should be revised to reflect the new research. Providers may now be required or encouraged to use curricula and/or assessments that were not being used at the time the original ELGs were developed, or the state’s kindergarten standards may have been revised. Results from the review/analysis can shed light on issues that need to be addressed during the revision process.

- It is also important to review the content of the ELG document to determine if the ELGs are as parsimonious as possible and reflect the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are most essential for children’s learning and development. Are the current ELGs all of equal importance, or are there some that are less essential? If your state has a large number of ELGs, perhaps there are some that can be eliminated or combined.

Related Issues:

- [Number and clarity of ELG items](#)
- [Process for reviewing/analyzing draft content](#)

Are the ELGs aligned with other standards documents, with curricula, and with assessments being used in programs?

- ELGs should be horizontally aligned with the curricula and assessments being used with children from the same age range as the ELGs. They also should be vertically aligned with the standards used with children who are younger and older than the ages addressed in the ELGs (provided that the other standards are age appropriate). Both of these types of alignment are the cornerstone of a cohesive and effective education system for young children. Discerning alignment, however, requires a relatively complex methodology, and is more than simply examining the “match” between items in different documents. Even if alignment analyses were conducted on the original ELGs, it is likely that alignment analyses should be conducted again. The curricula, assessments, or standards for other age ranges could have been changed or revised since the time the ELGs were originally written and alignment analyses conducted, or the original alignment analyses may have been inadequate. New alignment analyses could identify areas of misalignment with the current curricula and/or assessments being used in programs, or with revised standards for another age group.

Related Issue:

- [Alignment of the ELGs with other documents](#)

What do persons who have been using the document think about the current ELGs?

- Now that the ELG document has been used in the field, it is important to gather data on how well the users feel the document fits their work with children. There may be content areas that users feel should be added or revised, or they may have suggestions for

improving the format. Be sure to include users at all levels and from different roles (teachers/caregivers, program administrators, trainers, higher education faculty, etc.). It is also important to systematically collect data from users working with specific populations of children, such as English Language Learners and children with disabilities. Surveys or focus groups can provide important data on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the current document.

Related Issue:

- [Identifying the target audience](#)

What supplemental and companion materials were developed for the ELG document and how effective are they?

- Many states develop supplemental materials included within the ELG document or companion materials to be used with the document. Now is a time when the state can look at whether the information provided in these materials was useful and whether additional materials would be helpful to the target audience. There may be particular areas where users had some difficulty and expressed a need for additional information, such as use of the ELGs with English Language Learners. These areas should be addressed within the supplemental and companion materials for the revised ELGs.

Related Issues:

- [“Supplemental” sections of the document](#)
- [Companion materials to accompany the ELG document](#)

The ELG Revision Process

When states decide to revise ELGs, they should give careful consideration to the process that will be used to revise the document. Issues to consider include the following:

What were the strengths and weaknesses of the process used to develop the ELGs the first time?

- Although the revision process is different from the initial development of ELGs—often less intense and more data driven—it is still important to plan carefully for the process. Start with a frank evaluation of the original development process—were there aspects of the process that worked well or didn’t work? Who was involved and should they be involved this time? Who was “missing” that should be included? Based on these analyses, develop plans for how the revision process will be conducted.

Related Issues:

- [The ELG Development Process](#)

Who should lead the revision process?

- Although it may be quite logical and expedient for the same entity/agency that developed the existing ELGs to take the lead in the revision process, some consideration should be given as to whether there are reasons to consider a change in leadership. Perhaps a new agency with strong connections to/authority over the programs that use the ELGs has been established since the time the ELGs were originally developed. Perhaps there are political or practical reasons that a lead agency should be added for the revision process. If there have been changes in the service-delivery system or the political environment since the time the ELGs were developed, additional consideration should be given to the agency leadership and the composition of the leadership team for the revision process.

Related Issue:

- [Agency leadership for the development process](#)

How will stakeholders be involved in the revision process?

- Many states involve stakeholders extensively in the process of writing ELGs. States may want to think about the degree to which and how stakeholders will be involved in the revision process. While there are some benefits to convening a large stakeholder committee for the revision process, there may also be some rationale for using a smaller committee. States might also consider using stakeholder involvement strategically in the revision process—perhaps involving stakeholder groups who may not have been part of the original writing process (such as experts on dual language development) or who have been key users of the document more extensively, engaging stakeholders to provide feedback on specific issues of concern, etc. The level and type of stakeholder involvement should be considered in light of the state’s purpose for revising the ELGs, the anticipated content revisions, the resources available for the process, and the state’s previous experiences using the document.

Related Issue:

- [Stakeholder committees/workgroups](#)

What resources are available to support the ELG revision process?

- States vary in the extent to which resources are available to support the revision process. The availability of financial support, staff time, and contractors are all important resources to consider as you plan for the ELG revision process. The state’s current economic conditions and education/human service budgets may determine the resources available and, therefore, the scope and nature of the process that can be used to revise the ELGs.

Related Issues:

- [Designated personnel to manage the ELG development process](#)
- [Allocation of staff time](#)
- [Contractors to support the development process](#)
- [Financing the development and production of the document](#)

What timeframe should be allocated to the revision process?

- The timeframe for revising ELGs may be shorter than the timeframe necessary to write the original document. Given that the work is not starting from scratch—there is an existing document and persons with experience in developing ELGs in the state—it is reasonable to expect that the timeframe should be shorter. It is, however, important to allow sufficient time to gather data on how the document has been used, to conduct reviews of the current document and the revised document, and to plan for implementation of the revised document.

Related Issue:

- [Timeframe for the development process](#)

How will the revised ELG document be analyzed/reviewed?

- Even if the revision process is based on sound data from analyses conducted on the original ELG document, the revised document should be analyzed and reviewed thoroughly before it is finalized. It is important that reviews and analyses conducted on revised ELGs encompass the areas that have been described in Section I: expert review, age-appropriateness evaluation, content analyses, and alignment analyses. It may be advisable to target reviews and analyses to address issues of concern or weaknesses that were identified in the original ELG document to make sure that the revisions improved the document in these particular areas. Results from the reviews and analyses can be used to further strengthen the revised ELG document before it is finalized.

Related Issue:

- [Process for reviewing/analyzing draft content](#)

Implementation of Revised ELGs

Careful thought should be given to how the revised document will be disseminated and what resources are available to support the use of the document. The following are some issues to consider when planning for the implementation of a revised ELG document:

What adoption/endorsement is needed for the revised ELG document?

- If the original ELG document was endorsed/adopted by agencies and organizations within the state, it will be important to decide whether these same agencies and organizations should review and endorse/adopt the revised ELG document. It may also be good to consider whether there are additional organizations or agencies that did not endorse/adopt the original document that should be approached regarding the revised ELG document. Having additional agencies/organizations adopt/endorse the revised ELG document may strengthen efforts to promote use of the document within the state.

Related Issue:

- [Endorsement/adoption by agencies and organizations](#)

How will the revised document be disseminated?

- It is important to look at how the original ELG document was disseminated and to make plans for dissemination of the revised document. How did the target audience access the document? Did the number of hard copy documents published match the demand for the document? Did the target audience have access to electronic copies of the document and, if so, did they use the electronic version? What other formats should be considered for the document? It is important to revisit all the avenues through which the original document was disseminated to ensure that the revised copy replaces the original document wherever it is being disseminated.

Related Issue:

- [Dissemination of the ELG document](#)

What resources are needed to support practitioners who are using the revised document?

- Significant training and support are required for ELGs to be used effectively within the field. A state may have many processes and resources in place to support the use of the ELGs. If so, each process and resource will need to be revisited to ensure that plans are in place to help users switch to the revised version. It is important that all persons providing professional development on the ELG document receive a copy of the revised version and some information on how the document has changed. This means that both pre-service and in-service professional development providers need access to the revised document. It may be helpful to produce a document that describes the changes that were made during the revision process. You may also find it helpful to develop “refresher” training sessions that target persons who were already using the document to inform them on how it has changed and to reinforce how the new document should be used. Finally, any training or other professional development initiatives that are designed to introduce users to ELGs for the first time will need to be revised to reflect the new version of the ELGs.

Related Issue:

- [Training/TA, professional development, and other support](#)

How will the revised document be incorporated into other systems within the state?

- While it is important that the revised document is incorporated into the professional development system, there may be other quality improvement efforts, early care and education systems, or programs that are using the ELGs and need information about the revised document. For instance, the original ELG document may have been incorporated into the state’s QRIS, or pre-kindergarten programs may be required to use the ELGs. If so, these initiatives and programs may need to make changes to incorporate the revised document.

Related Issue:

- [Use of the document within other systems in the state](#)

If there is a system in place to monitor the use of the ELGs, how will the revised ELG document be incorporated?

- Some states have established a system to monitor whether programs or providers are using the ELG document. If your state has such a system, you will need to make plans for how the revised ELG document will be used in the monitoring system. Perhaps this is an opportune time to examine how well the monitoring system is working and make improvements. It may be prudent to phase in requirements for monitoring the use of the revised ELG document to allow sufficient time for programs to receive copies and training on the revised ELGs.

Related Issue:

- [Monitoring the use of the ELGs](#)

Conclusion

The process of writing and using ELGs is complex. Whether developing ELGs for the first time or revising existing ELGs, states must think carefully about many aspects of the process. This document has described many of the issues states must consider and decisions that states make in the ELG writing process. We hope that by raising these issues, states that use the document will experience a more efficient writing process and will produce high-quality ELG documents.