

# *EXPLORING NEW DIRECTIONS:*

## CONDUCTING A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A POTENTIAL NEW CREDENTIAL



### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP), a membership association of more than 6,000 child life specialists, was considering the development of a new, advanced-level credential to complement its existing “flagship” program. Based on feedback obtained through a recent job analysis study, practitioners believed advanced skills existed that ACLP could assess and recognize. ACLP understood the need to strategically approach the development of a potential new program—carefully weighing the need for an additional layer of assessment at the advanced-level, return on the investment required to develop a quality certification program, and the specific skills that differentiate an advanced-level practitioner.

The organization partnered with SeaCrest to conduct a feasibility study exploring the organization’s need for and interest in an advanced-level certification or assessment-based certificate program for child life professionals.

### THE SEACREST APPROACH

The feasibility study encompassed a three-step process: (1) an initial focus group with subject matter experts (SMEs); (2) an electronic survey of current Certified Child Life Specialists (CCLS); and (3) a second, more in-depth focus group with survey respondents.

#### **1. Pulling in the experts**

The purpose of the initial focus group was to gather experts to decipher the potential need for an advanced-level credentialing product. The group also discussed current and future directions of the profession and the overall value of a certification or certificate program to practitioners and employers. SeaCrest facilitated the process by leveraging its experience launching new credentialing products to develop discussion questions and lead the group in productive dialogue to inform the development of a larger survey.

#### **2. A survey for key takeaways**

The important takeaways garnered from the initial focus group provided the foundation for a wider survey of the CCLS audience. SeaCrest assembled and disseminated an electronic survey to investigate topics including: essential roles and advanced skills; demographics of practitioners; certification and certificate perceptions; cost influences; and more.

*“We learned about the probability for success of different types of credentialing products. There were lots of folks in our community who passionately wanted to see us offer a new certificate or credential. Having done the legwork, or rather having SeaCrest do that for us, we had a better rationale for why we decided not to proceed. Having the third party as a respected authority backing it up was extremely helpful. It was a pleasure working with the team and I would wholeheartedly support using them to consult again in the future.”* –Ame Enright, Director of Certification, ACLP

### 3. Exploring takeaways for consistency

After deciphering important themes and insights from the survey results, SeaCrest coordinated a deeper investigation through a second focus group, discussing recommendations related to an advanced-level credentialing product in more detail. This aspect was essential to ensure consistency in themes throughout each step of the process and gather additional qualitative evidence to support the project.

### 4. Putting it all together

SeaCrest wrapped the study with a larger presentation to ACLP leadership detailing an evaluation of options and key issues to consider, all of which was learned through the strategic process of interviewing experts and current certificants. The larger report included an overview of the process, key findings from each step, new discoveries, cost considerations, connections to ACLP’s larger mission, and recommendations for next steps. The report also provided notes from each focus group, raw survey data, and a summary of learnings from both.

## RESULTS AND DETERMINATIONS

Through collaborating with SeaCrest and utilizing an established feasibility study process, ACLP had the necessary tools and information to make educated, strategic decisions about a potential new product. The study allowed the organization to determine the type of clinical skills at an advanced-level and identify other professional skillsets that could be developed with experience and training such as leadership, mentoring, etc. “By going through our feasibility study process, the client is better able to see things more clearly, and ultimately, better equipped to make important decisions regarding the realities of the environment, audience differences, and the most effective ways to reach their certificants,” said SeaCrest President, Cynthia Allen. “We were pleased to assist ACLP through this process as they made consequential decisions about the direction of their certification program.”

The information gathered through this process, and the discussions that resulted, allowed ACLP to strategically evaluate options and identify resources to round out its credentialing portfolio consistent with the needs of more experienced practitioners and the future direction of the practice.

*“I found everyone I encountered from SeaCrest to be extremely professional, courteous and accommodating. The results of the project confirmed my suspicions. It was very good to have that evidence to back up our decisions. Having worked with SeaCrest and having them as an unbiased third party really helped us make an informed decision about whether to proceed with a new certification product.”* –Ame Enright, Director of Certification, ACLP