

## MRTQ PDN Accreditation Cohort: Participant Overview

*The Technical Assistance Competencies for Maine's Early Childhood Workforce define peer-to-peer networks (cohorts, communities of practice, professional learning communities) as "groups of practitioners engaging to improve their skills and knowledge through collaborative study, expertise exchange, and professional dialogue." The cohort model provides an opportunity for a group of individuals or programs to proceed towards achieving a common goal within a defined timeframe.*



### **What is an Accreditation Cohort?**

An Accreditation Cohort is a group of program owners/directors who work together with a trained facilitator to share resources and support around obtaining or maintaining national Accreditation. The Accreditation process ensures that early childhood education programs have met a specific set of quality standards as defined by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), or the Council on Accreditation (COA).

*"We would not have been able to achieve accreditation without guidance from our cohort leader, and the support of the entire cohort. The cohort provided a framework, and timelines which were crucial in navigating through this challenging process."*

- Cohort participant

### **How do I join an Accreditation Cohort?**

If you are an owner, director, or designee with an interest in and time to work towards renewing or achieving accreditation\*, you can fill out the Accreditation Cohort Request at this link: [https://mrtq-registry.org/public/onsite\\_request?test=1](https://mrtq-registry.org/public/onsite_request?test=1)

### **What are my responsibilities when participating in an Accreditation Cohort?**

Cohort participants agree to:

- Complete the necessary forms/documentation and ensure all program staff are active MRTQ Registry members.
- Participate in cohort meetings (participants earn MRTQ PDN professional growth hours for attending) and work on accreditation standards/requirements between cohort meetings.
- Maintain membership in the appropriate accrediting body.

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*"I have benefited greatly, beyond what I thought I would get out of the experience. I have learned that I am doing things right for the children I care for and seeing measurable improvements in all areas."*

*- Cohort participant*

### **What is the time commitment?**

Cohorts meet monthly for up to two hours for up to 18 months.

Participants must complete accreditation-related activities in between meetings (approximately 4-10 hours per month). The goal of these activities is to prepare the program to meet the accreditation standards and be evaluated by the national accrediting body.

### **How will participation in the cohort help my program to achieve accreditation?**

Cohort participants will receive:

- Facilitator and peer support to create and/or revise policies and procedures and compile documents required to meet accreditation standards.
- Environmental support (on-site or via Zoom).
- Support in preparing application materials.
- Individualized assistance from the facilitator including preparing for the on-site observation and interview (if applicable).

### **Does MRTQ PDN offer financial assistance?**

Yes, MRTQ PDN has funding to support some of the accreditation fees. You can request details by emailing:

[mrtq.contact@maine.edu](mailto:mrtq.contact@maine.edu)

Periodically, funding is available to MRTQ PDN to offer mini-grants to programs. When these funds are available, MRTQ PDN will share that info with cohort participants before or during the application process.

*"All my questions were answered and I felt fully supported when I ran into problems."*

*- Cohort participant*

\* For those interested in NAFCC accreditation, you must be 21 years of age before or during the cohort, must have a HS diploma/ GED/HiSET, and have at least 6 months of experience as a family child care business owner.

*Please note that participation in an MRTQ PDN Accreditation Cohort is voluntary and does not guarantee that a program will achieve accreditation.*