

2024-2025 Quality Improvement Awards

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Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (MRTQ PDN) is partnering with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services (DHHS, OCFS) to offer Quality Improvement Awards to Maine early childhood and out-of-school time programs.

Purpose

To support and reward early childhood and out-of-school time programs to increase their Star rating in *Rising Stars for ME*. The Quality Improvement Awards are available to eligible programs moving from Star 2 to 3, Star 3 to 4, Star 4 to 5, or maintaining a Star 5.

Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a Quality Improvement Award, programs will:

- Have an unexpired Star 2 rating or above on *Rising Stars for ME*, Maine's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).
- Have completed, up to date, *Rising Stars for ME* application, reflecting current program practices and staff.
- Be enrolled in the DHHS OCFS Supplement Program.
- Be operating without a Conditional License issued by Child Care Licensing. If your program becomes Conditional during the Quality Improvement Award process, you may continue to work toward the increased Star rating but would not be eligible for further funding. Once the conditional status is resolved, you may receive the remainder of the award funds, depending on the funding availability.
- Have or will create a vendor account for the University of Maine System.

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Funding

The Quality Improvement awards consist of two funding parts: the initial funding to support the work needed to meet *Rising Stars for ME* standards and a cash award after increasing the Star rating. The combination of these cannot exceed \$10,000.

- Based on the *Rising Stars for ME* Standards, initial funding may cover:
 - Cost of MRTQ PDN or State-Approved training.
 - Personal or substitute time to participate in training or Technical Assistance offerings.
 - Purchases of materials and equipment.
 - Minor changes and upgrades to the program's physical space.
 - An administrative stipend to plan and implement changes.
 - Other needs to support and meet the *Rising Stars for ME* requirements.
- Once the Quality Improvement Plan is complete and the Star rating has increased, programs receive a cash payment of:
 - \$3500, for an increase from Star 2 to 3.
 - \$3000, for an increase from Star 3 to 4.
 - \$2500, for an increase from 4 to 5 or for maintaining Star 5.
- Awards are provided on a first come, first served basis starting April 1, 2024, until funds are exhausted, or the funding deadline has passed.

Steps

To receive a Quality Improvement Award, a program will follow these steps:

1. Complete or update a *Rising Stars for ME* application, if needed.
2. Submit a *Quality Improvement Plan* using its *Rising Stars for ME* Recommendations. and identifying steps and resources needed to meet *Rising Stars for ME* Standards. This can be found on the first page of the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet (see below).
3. Meet with MRTQ PDN staff to finalize the Quality Improvement Plan.
4. Submit a *Funding Request* for MRTQ PDN approval. This can be found on the second page of the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet (see below).
5. Work on requirements identified in the Quality Improvement Plan and reapply for new *Rising Stars for ME* rating.

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How to get started

Program Owner or Director will:

- Complete or update a *Rising Stars for ME* application or view your *Rising Stars for ME* Recommendation Page by visiting [Rising Stars for ME](#).
- Access the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet by
 - a. Emailing mrtq.qiawards@maine.edu, or
 - b. Visit the [Quality Initiatives web page](#) and download the **Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet** that matches your program:
- Visit the [Quality Initiatives web page](#) and read the [Instructions - Quality Improvement Plan and Funding Request](#) and start planning.

Deadlines

To allow time to complete the *Rising Stars for ME* requirements and increase the Star rating or maintain a Star 5 by the end of the anticipated funding period:

- Programs working toward a Star 3 or 4 must submit the Quality Improvement Plan no later than May 1, 2026, and submit a new *Rising Stars* application by October 31, 2026.
- Programs working on Star 5 must anticipate meeting all *Rising Stars for ME* Star 5 standards and complete the accreditation application by October 31, 2026

For more details, including [Frequently Asked Questions](#), visit the [Quality Initiatives](#) web page.

MRTQ PDN provides individual support for individuals having difficulty with accessing or completing any portion of the Quality Improvement Award process due to an individualized need such as a disability, language barriers, etc., If interested, contact Karen Bergeron at mrtq.qiawards@maine.edu or 207-653-5090

Please contact Karen Bergeron, Quality Initiatives Manager, at 207-653-5090 or mrtq.qiawards@maine.edu with any questions or if you are having difficulty accessing or completing the Quality Improvement Plan spreadsheet due to technology barriers.