

Quality Improvement Plan Instructions

Quality Improvement Awards

Quality Improvement Awards are available to support and reward eligible early childhood and out-of-school time programs to increase their Star rating in *Rising Stars for ME*. Programs will use their *Rising Stars for ME* Recommendations to create a Quality Improvement Plan and meet with Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (MRTQ PDN) staff to be connected to resources needed to increase their Star rating and receive a Quality Improvement Award. For more details about the Quality Improvement Awards, including eligibility and deadlines, see the **2024-2025 Quality Improvement Awards** on the [Quality Initiatives web page](#).

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Quality Improvement Plan

The Quality Improvement Plan is designed to help eligible programs identify elements needed to meet the *Rising Stars for ME* requirements.

To receive the Quality Improvement Award, each licensed Program Owner or Director will:

- Complete and submit a Quality Improvement Plan using the *Rising Stars for ME* requirements. Programs working toward or maintaining a Star 5 will also use the standards of their National Accrediting body or Head Start.
- Meet with MRTQ PDN staff to review the Quality Improvement Plan and connect with available resources.
- Determine funding needs and submit a funding request.
- Complete the steps identified in your Quality Improvement Plan.

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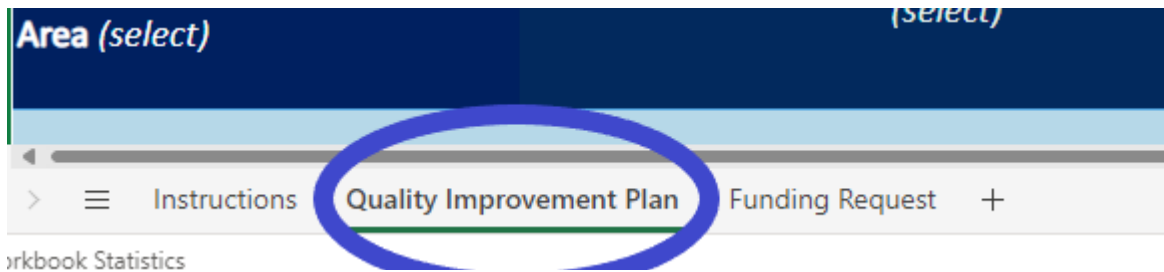
- Update the Quality Improvement Plan and funding requests at least every three months.
- Submit a Quality Improvement Plan no later than May 1, 2025, or until funds run out.

How to Complete the Quality Improvement Plan

1) Accessing the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet and Worksheet:

- a) Download the [Facilities - Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet](#) or [Family Child Care - Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet](#).
- b) Open the Quality Improvement Plan sheet by clicking on the tab at the bottom of the spreadsheet. See Figure 1.

c) *Figure 1: The tabs at the bottom of the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet*



- c) Optional: If you prefer a paper version to write out your plans first, download and print the [Quality Improvement Plan Worksheet](#).

- Note:
 - Mac Computer users may find the Spreadsheet does not work properly. Please contact Karen Bergeron for alternate access to the Spreadsheet.
 - If you need assistance in accessing the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet or Worksheet due to technology barriers, contact Karen Bergeron at mrtq.qjwards@maine.edu or 207-653-5090.

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2) Find your *Rising Stars for ME* Star Rating and Requirements

- a) Log in to the [Rising Stars for ME Website](#) using your Maine Roads to Quality Registry login and password and your program's license number.
- b) Next, click on "Your Rising Stars Application."
- c) On the My Application History page select the most recent application in the list.
- d) Once the application page is open,
 - 1) Find your current Star rating next to "final Score" toward the bottom of the page.
 - 2) Toward the top of the page, click on "Recommendations" to see your Recommendations by Standard. This shows you what requirements are needed to reach the next Star rating for each Standard.

For example, if your program has achieved a Star 2 in Standard 1: Learning Environment and Developmentally Appropriate Practice, the requirements to reach Star 3 are listed below each Standard. See Figure 2 below.

- Note the number label for each requirement. This number indicates the Standard, the Requirement, and the Star rating.

Figure 2: Sample of Recommendations for Standard 1

Standard 1: Learning Environment / Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Your program receives a Star 2 in Standard 1. To move to Star 3 in Standard 1, your program must meet the following:

- 1.3.6 For programs serving children six weeks to kindergarten: The Program Owner/Director has completed the training(s) relevant to all ages enrolled in the program: Infant and Toddler Maine Early Learning and Development Standards (MELDS) for ages birth to 3; Maine's Early Learning and Development Standards for ages 3-5. Administrative evidence from MRTQ Registry
- 1.3.7 For programs serving children six weeks to kindergarten: The Infant and Toddler MELDS and MELDS documents are referred to during activity planning.

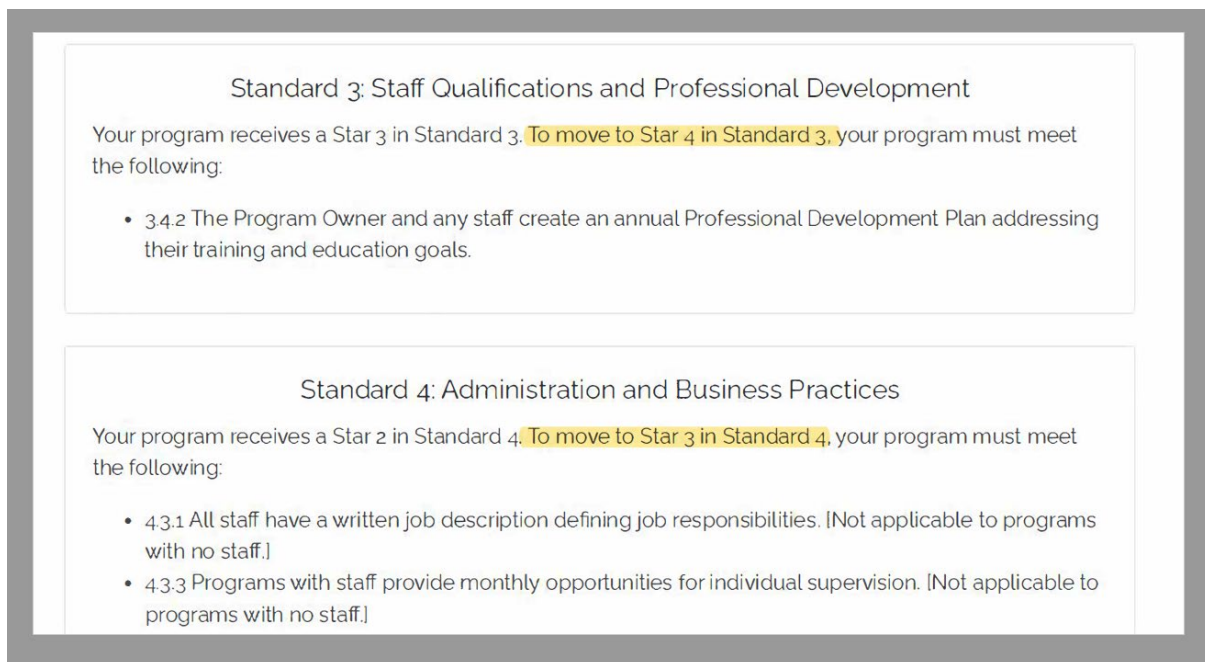
3) Identify the requirements needed to increase your Star rating

- a) On the Recommendations Page, find the *Rising Stars for ME* Standards that state how to move to your desired Star.

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For example, your program is a Star 2, and you are working toward a Star 3. Find the Standards that state, “**to move to a Star 3.**” The numbered list below the Standard are the requirements you will include in your Quality Improvement Plan. If you are already meeting your desired Star in a Standard, you will not focus on those requirements now. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Sample of Star 2 Recommendations Page and list of requirements. This Program is moving to a Star 3 so it will focus on Standard 4 but not Standard 3 as it has already met Star 3 for that Standard



Standard 3: Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

Your program receives a Star 3 in Standard 3. **To move to Star 4 in Standard 3,** your program must meet the following:

- 3.4.2 The Program Owner and any staff create an annual Professional Development Plan addressing their training and education goals.

Standard 4: Administration and Business Practices

Your program receives a Star 2 in Standard 4. **To move to Star 3 in Standard 4,** your program must meet the following:

- 4.3.1 All staff have a written job description defining job responsibilities. [Not applicable to programs with no staff.]
- 4.3.3 Programs with staff provide monthly opportunities for individual supervision. [Not applicable to programs with no staff.]

b) Programs working toward or maintaining a Star 5 rating, will also identify the Standards for your National Accreditation or Head Start programming that you need to meet.

4) Preparing to create a Quality Improvement Plan. Optional: use the Quality Improvement Plan Worksheet (from Step 1) to help you with this step

a) For each *Rising Stars for ME* requirement (for programs moving to Star 3 or 4) or Standard (for programs moving to or maintaining Star 5) identified in Step 4, think about what will be needed.

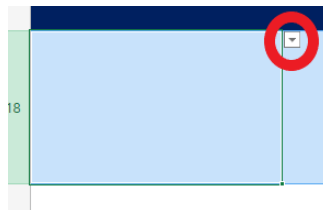
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- i. What steps will be taken to meet this requirement and what resources will be needed? Will you need to attend a training? Do you need to research and plan how to implement this change? Do you need to purchase items to meet this requirement? Do you need advice? Do you need funding to purchase materials?
 - ii. Determine who will be responsible for each requirement and who will be involved. Will you or someone else take the lead on this requirement? Are there staff members that will play a role?
 - iii. When will your program begin this work? Will you focus on this in the next 0-3 months, 3-6 months, or 6 plus months?
- b) Complete the Quality Improvement Plan to the best of their ability. If there are missing steps or resources, this can be completed when meeting with MRTQ PDN staff.

5) Completing and submitting the Quality Improvement Plan

- a) Open the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet (from Step 1).
- b) Fill in your program and Star Rating information in the top section.
- c) Move to Row 18 (below where it says, "Start here!") and click on the first cell. As you enter the information, move across the page.
 - i. **Rising Stars for ME Standard Area** (Column A): Indicate what Standard you will address. Standard options are in a drop-down list. Once you click on the box, click on the arrow just outside the right side of the box, and then click on the Standard you are addressing. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Drop-down list arrow circled in red



- ii. **Rising Stars for ME Requirement** (Column B): Indicate what requirement will be a focus. Click on the box to access the drop-down list and choose the requirement (same steps as above). The easiest way to find the

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- requirement is to use the number label (i.e., 1.3.4). Remember to only include the requirements needed to meet your desired Star level. Programs working on Star 5 will choose the “working toward or maintaining a Star 5” option and add details in the Notes Column.
- iii. **Action Steps and Resources needed to meet the requirement** (Column C). Type the steps and resources that will help you meet this requirement.
 - iv. **People Responsible or Involved in meeting the requirement** (Column D). OPTIONAL. Type the names of those who are responsible or will be involved.
 - v. **Funding Category** (column E). From the drop-down list, indicate what funding category may be needed for this requirement. Choose from:
 1. Training and Technical Assistance (TA) offering. Will you need to take training, join a peer-to-peer network, or work with a District Coordinator?
 2. Material, Equipment, or Supply purchases. Will you need to purchase items for your program or make changes to the physical space?
 3. No funds needed. If this requirement does not need funding.
 4. Other. If your need does not fit into any of the above.
 5. If unsure which funding category to choose, leave it blank.
 - vi. **Timeline for Completion** (column F). From the drop-down list, indicate if you will work on this requirement in the next 0-3 months, 3-6 months, 6 plus months.
 - vii. **Notes** (Column G). Add any general notes you feel are important. For programs working on Star 5, enter the Standard letter/number label or a brief description you are working on.
- d) Choose the next Rising Stars for ME requirement and complete Steps i-vii. Repeat until all identified requirements appear.
- 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, technology barriers, etc. If interested, contact Karen Bergeron at mrtq.qiawards@maine.edu or 207-653-5090.

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6) Submitting The Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet

- a) Once the Quality Improvement Plan is complete, please attach it to an email and send it to mrtq.qiawards@maine.edu
 - Note: If you are working on a Mac computer, export the spreadsheet to an Excel file (.xlsx) before emailing. Find more details [here](#).
 - If you have trouble completing the spreadsheets, check out the troubleshooting section at the end of this document.

7) Next Steps

After receiving your spreadsheet, MRTQ PDN staff:

- c) Will reach out with clarifying questions or to arrange a time to discuss your plan and connect you with helpful resources.
- d) Will establish a communication plan for sharing and collecting information during the award process.
- e) May ask you to provide before and after photos related to the anticipated changes in your program.
- f) Will share more details on completing the funding request page.

Quality Improvement Award Funding

The Quality Improvement Award has two parts, the initial funding to support the work needed to meet the desired Star rating in *Rising Stars for ME* and a cash payment after the program has received a higher Star rating. Programs will use their completed Quality Improvement Plan to request the initial funding to cover:

- The Cost of MRTQ PDN or State-Approved training.
- Personal or substitute time to participate in training or Technical Assistance (TA) offerings.
- Purchases of materials and equipment.
- Changes and upgrades to the program's physical space
- An administrative stipend to plan and implement changes.

Important Information about the Quality Improvement Initial Funding

- Programs will submit a Quality Improvement Spreadsheet and work with MRTQ PDN Staff before requesting initial funds.

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- Programs will estimate reasonable and necessary costs of all needs based on their Quality Improvement Plan, including expected purchases, training, etc., and submit via the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet or other established communication system.
- MRTQ PDN will calculate the total funding amounts and email details and approval to programs.
- Funds will be paid in advance of the work and will be dispersed in multiple payments. Payments are based on the timeline established in the Quality Improvement Plan and program updates, about every three months.
- Programs will submit receipts of purchases and contracted work and requested photos, if needed.

1) Preparing to complete the funding request information

- If purchasing items, equipment, or supplies, determine what will be purchased and calculate an estimate. Include taxes and shipping fees.
 - Items not covered by this funding are those that get used up or discarded. This includes food, diapers, and art supplies such as paper, markers, and crayons.
 - Items may be purchased anywhere you choose.
 - Supplies to create or build your needed items are acceptable.
- If making physical changes to your building, prepare a list of supplies needed, or get a professional estimate. Include shipping and taxes.
- If taking MRTQ PDN and or state-approved training, please find the training name on the [Training Calendar](#) or [On-Demand Training](#) list and note the training hours.
- If you will be participating in any Technical Assistance offerings, please include the name of the offering.
- If needing funding that does not fit in the above categories, calculate the funds, including tax and shipping.

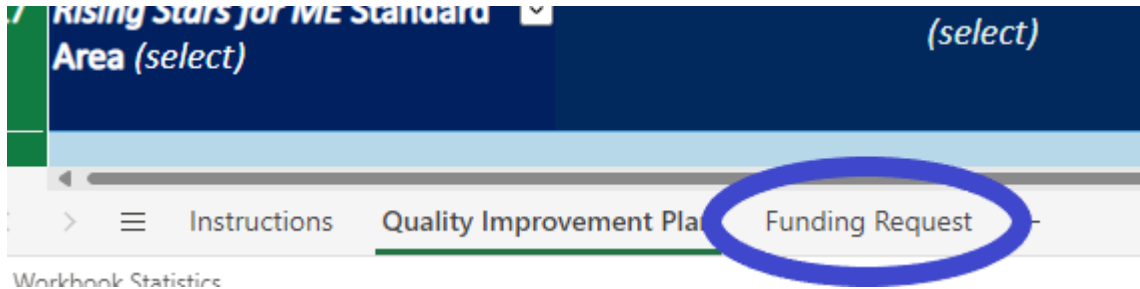
2) To Complete the Quality Improvement Plan Funding Request

- Revisit your Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet and open the "Funding Request" tab at the bottom of the page. See Figure 5.

Figure 5: The tabs at the bottom of the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet with the Funding Request tab circled

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in blue



- Note that your “*Rising Stars for ME Requirements*”, “*Action Steps and Resources Required*”, and “*Funding Category*” (Columns A-C) have all been carried over from the Quality Improvement Plan sheet. If you need to make changes, return to the Quality Improvement Plan sheet to do so.
- b) Starting under the purple cells, in Row 21, For each *Rising Stars for ME Requirement*, read across the page to Column C “*Funding Category*.” Use this information to determine where to enter the details and funds needed. Each funding category has one to three spaces for information and is marked with a yellow or orange color (columns D-K). See Figure 6.

Figure 6: Columns D-K of the Funding Request sheet

Choose the columns associated with your Funding category (listed in Column C), and enter the required details.							
Training Offering			Technical Assistance	Materials, Equipment, or Supply Purchases		Other Funding Request	
Name of Training Offering	Number of Staff taking Training	Total Training Hours <small>(how long is the required training?)</small>	Technical Assistance (TA) Offering <small>Name</small>	Materials, Equipment, or Supplies required <small>(describe what is required)</small>	Cost of Materials, Equipment, or Supplies required <small>(enter number - include taxes, shipping, contracted services)</small>	Describe Other Funding Request	Cost
			Consultation				

- If you or someone from your program needs to take a training, under the “*Training Offerings*” columns, enter the name of the training in Column D, the number of people who need to take the training in Column E, and the total hours of the training in Column F.
- If you will be participating in a “*Technical Assistance Offering*,” enter the name in Column G.
- If you will be purchasing “*Materials, Equipment or Supplies*” for your program or will be changing the program’s physical space, enter a description of what

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- you will be purchasing in Column H and the cost in Column I. Include the taxes and shipping for your purchases.
- iv. If you have "Other Funding Requests" type the description in Column J and the cost in column K.
 - v. Based on the timeline you identified on your Quality Improvement Plan, select a status from the drop-down list in Column L. Your options are "Starting in 0-3 Months" "Starting later" "In Progress" or "Completed," Note: The information in this column will be used to determine your first payment. The first payment will be for items you will be starting in 0-3 months. The Status column will also be used for updates you submit along the way which will determine future payments.
 - vi. Please include any information you would like to add in Column M "Notes."
- c) Don't forget to save your Spreadsheet.

3) Submitting your Funding Request Sheet.

- a) The Funding Request will be submitted via the individual communication system previously established.
- b) Contact Karen Bergeron at mrtq.qiawards@maine.edu or 207-653-5090 with any questions.

4) Next Steps

MRTQ PDN Staff will review the Funding Request, complete the calculations, and reach out to you via email with funding totals and approval. At this point, you will be asked to commit to working toward your desired Star level and agree to use the funds as planned.

Quality Improvement Plan Updates

Updates to your Quality Improvement Plan are required and will determine future payments. It is an opportunity for you to show your progress on your work, make updates to your timeline, and submit receipts or photos, as needed. Updates should be made once every three months or based on progress meeting the requirements.

1) To Complete the Quality Improvement Plan Updates

- a) Revisit the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet and the Funding Request tab. You will focus on Columns L and M, in Purple. See Figure 7 below.

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Figure 7: Columns related to Updates on the Funding Request tab

L	M
Status <i>(select from drop-down list)</i>	Notes: (optional write-in) <i>General notes, updated funding information, actual spending, etc.</i>

- b) Change the Status of any requirements you have been working on or plan to work on in the next three months. Click on the box and the arrow just to the right of the cell, open the drop-down list, and choose: "In Progress" "Starting in 0-3 Months" or "Completed."
- c) Add any details in the Notes Column (M). This should include general notes about your progress, updated funding needs, and actual funds spent.

2) Submitting your Updates

- 1) Updates will be submitted via the individual communication system previously established.
- 2) Email all receipts for items purchased and any requested photos to mrtq.qjwards@maine.edu


3) Next Steps

Continue to update the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet at least once every three months until your plan is completed, and before you reapply for a new *Rising Stars for ME* Certificate. The final cash payment for increasing your Star Rating is funding you may use as you choose and will not require any follow-up reporting.

Trouble Shooting

- If you have downloaded the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet and it does not appear to be working correctly, contact Karen Bergeron. The spreadsheet may not work as intended on Mac Computers and Google Drive.

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- When Completing the Quality Improvement Plan, **if the *Rising Stars for ME* requirement you are focusing on does not appear** in the drop-down list:
 - Ensure you are using the Quality Improvement Plan Spreadsheet for your type of program.
 - Ensure the correct *Rising Stars for ME* Standard appears in the previous column. Your choices for the requirements are based on the Standard you chose in the previous column.
- If you are **working toward or maintaining a Star 5:**
 - Choose a *Rising Stars for ME* Standard that best fits the National Accreditation Standard you need to meet.
 - Choose “Working toward or maintaining a Star 5” and add the Standard name/letter label or short description to the Notes column.
- If you **run out of rows** to enter all your requirements, please contact Karen Bergeron at mrtq.qiawards@maine.edu.
- If you are working on the Funding Request sheet and tried **to make changes to the “Rising Stars for ME Requirement,” “Action Steps and Resources” and “Funding Category”** columns, it will not work.
 - Changes to Columns A-C, “Rising Stars for ME Requirements,” “Action Steps and Resources required” and “Funding Category,” can only be made on the Quality Improvement Plan sheet. Once changes are made there, you will see the updates on the Funding Request sheet.
- If you type into a cell, hit enter, and **receive the message “The Value doesn’t match the data validation restrictions defined for this cell.”**
 - You may be typing in a cell with a drop-down list. Click on the cell and look for a down arrow just to the right of the cell. Click on the arrow and choose from the list.
- If you see a yellow **caution sign**  when you click on a cell,
 - Continue to type. This should not interfere with entering information or choosing from the drop-down list. If it does, reach out to mrtq.qiawards@maine.edu.