



# Quality Matters

## **FUNDING ELIGIBILITY AND QUALITY GROWTH PLANS**

### **A GUIDE**

FOR LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTRES

## 1. What is Quality Matters?

Quality Matters (QM) is a province-wide early childhood continuous quality improvement system. It is based on international evidence regarding the importance of quality in early childhood education and care. It is informed by international practices to support quality improvements in licensed child care centres.

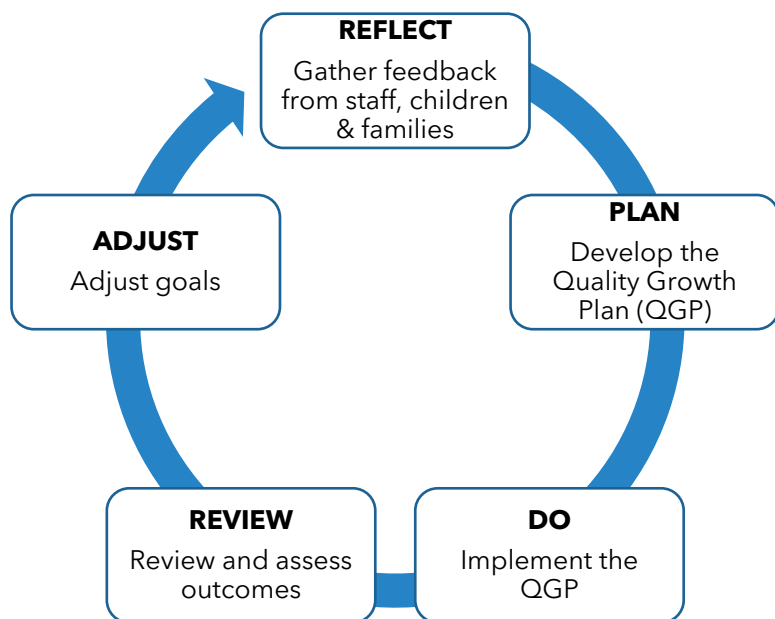
## 2. Who is required to participate in Quality Matters?

All licensed child care centres that receive provincial funding must participate in QM. Participation is voluntary for centres that do not receive provincial funding.

## 3. What does Quality Matters assess?

QM ensures that eligibility to receive public funding for licensed child care centres is linked to demonstrated accountability, which includes:

- 3.1 **Compliance** with provisions of Nova Scotia's *Early Learning and Child Care Act and Regulations*, policies, standards, and licensing and monitoring activities.
- 3.2 **Accountability** for provincial funding and compliance with terms and conditions of the Master Funding Agreement, including all financial and audit requirements of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).
- 3.3 **Program Quality** to be maintained through implementation of the [\*Capable, Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework\*](#) and commitment to continuous quality improvement through the development, implementation, and assessment of Quality Growth Plans.



**Continuous quality improvement** is a strategy that asks us to reflect daily on our practice and ask questions such as:

- What has been working well, and where do we have room for growth?
- What can we do to improve upon our current practices?
- Is there another approach that might work better?
- What do we need to know and learn to improve our services and programs for children and families?

Licensed centres are encouraged to use the [self-assessment templates](#) to gather feedback from staff, children and families, but are not required to submit these templates to EECD.

## 4. What are the requirements for Quality Matters?






Licensed and provincially funded centres are required to develop an annual **Quality Growth Plan**:

- 4.1 Include 2 – 4 goals that focus on an [Assessment for Quality Improvement \(AQI\) domain](#), **or** one of the 4 key elements of program quality:
  - a. **Leadership - professional, pedagogical, and administrative**  
Leadership focuses on developing effective program management practices. Good leadership focuses on the inherent value of children and program personnel, and their work is recognized and acknowledged.
  - b. **Staffing (Educators) - qualifications, professional development, and human resources**  
This element focuses on hiring trained staff, having a clear organizational structure, and supporting staff development through orientation, mentorship, coaching, and professional learning and programming, and encouraging collaborative program planning.
  - c. **Learning Environments - high quality and inclusive**  
High quality learning environments embrace Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework and promote children's growth, development, and well-being. Key elements of the learning environment include the physical environment, both indoors and outdoors; daily schedules and routines that provide predictability and flow for children and their families; and meaningful learning experiences for children.
  - d. **Relationships - interactions and partnerships with children, families, staff, other professionals and the community**  
Young children thrive in early childhood settings when they have positive and secure relationships with educators who know how to stimulate and nurture their learning, development, and well-being. Establishing and maintaining reciprocal relationships among educators and families is key to quality. Families are recognized as important contributors to programs, with unique knowledge, experiences, and strengths.
- 4.2 Licensed centres in receipt of the **Inclusion Support Grant** must include 2 inclusion-related goals or clearly embed elements of inclusion into all of their goals.
- 4.3 Licensed centres with infant programs are encouraged to include goals aimed at improving infant quality care.
- 4.4 For each goal, centres are required to:
  - a. Indicate which of the 4 elements of quality or AQI domain is related to the goal
  - b. List several actions or strategies that will be used to accomplish the goal
  - c. Indicate the resources or supports that are needed to assist in achieving the goal
  - d. List the principles, practices, and learning goals of Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework that will be worked on as progress towards the goal occurs
  - e. Explain the intended results, indicate how success will be measured, and set a timeline for the goal



## 5. How do we define strong and meaningful goals?

The SMART<sup>1</sup> approach to goal setting can help you to develop effective and realistic goals. Your goals should state what you will be working toward, rather than practices you will end (e.g., we are going to stop cancelling staff meetings).

 S	<b>Specific:</b> Target a specific area for improvement
 M	<b>Measurable:</b> Identify an indicator of progress
 A	<b>Assignable:</b> Specify who will do it
 R	<b>Realistic:</b> State what results can be realistically achieved, given available resources
 T	<b>Time - related:</b> Specify when the results can be achieved

## 6. What is the role of the Quality Assurance Specialist?

Your program's Quality Assurance Specialist will:

- 6.1 Review and determine if your centre's Quality Growth Plan meets the QM requirements and connect with you on a quarterly basis to monitor progress towards your goals.
- 6.2 Provide guidance and resources to support you in the development of your Quality Growth Plans (e.g., Quality Growth Plan template, chart with examples of goals, updates on professional learning opportunities, etc.).
- 6.3 Ensure your centre's adherence to the broader provisions of QM (e.g., compliance with regulations and terms and conditions for Quality Investment Grant, and Infant Quality Care Grant and Inclusion Support Grant funding, if applicable).

## 7. What happens if our centre does not make progress towards our QM goals?

Your Quality Assurance Specialist may issue a warning letter if you have not actioned your Quality Growth Plan in the first quarter and if you do not show evidence of progress in subsequent quarters. A warning letter may lead to termination of provincial funding if progress is not made in the quarter following the issuance of the warning letter. If funding is cancelled due to unsatisfactory performance in QM, the provider must notify staff and families of the cancellation.

## 8. When do we submit our Quality Growth Plan to our Quality Assurance Specialist?

Your Quality Assurance Specialist will meet with you in Q4 to verify progress and results of the previous year's plan and discuss new/modified/extended goals for the upcoming fiscal year. Quality growth plans must be submitted to your Quality Assurance Specialist by **April 1<sup>st</sup>** of each year.

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<sup>1</sup> Doran, G. T. (1981). "There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives." Management Review. AMA FORUM. 70 (11), 35-36.