

Granite Steps for Quality

Frequently Asked Questions

As of April 3, 2023

FAQs are subject to change. In addition, corrections will be made for errors, omissions and changes as needed.

General Knowledge

1. What is “Granite Steps for Quality” (GSQ)?
 - a. Granite Steps for Quality (GSQ): NH's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) is a system that recognizes program quality and intends to support programs through continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts. GSQ is designed to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in a program.
2. What are the benefits of GSQ?
 - a. NH's QRIS: Granite Steps for Quality benefits families and children, programs and individuals, as well as the NH Community. Families and communities deserve high quality care and education.
 - b. Some of the benefits of the GSQ system include training and technical assistance, observations, program assessment, and ongoing practice-based coaching. All of these incentives are included in participation of GSQ and are free of cost to the provider.
 - c. In addition, programs can receive financial incentives through New Hampshire Child Care Scholarship Program participation and quarterly and annual quality incentive funds.
3. How do I apply for NH's QRIS: Granite Steps for Quality?
 - a. As of June 3, 2022 GSQ Applications are paper only. Find the application here: <https://www.nh-connections.org/providers/quality-care-matters/> Send hard copy documentation with your paper application.
4. What are blockers that may cause a delay in my GSQ application review/award?
 - a. Some items that may cause a delay in a GSQ application review and award include: an expired Background Record Check (BRC) status, programs having an outstanding Statement of Findings or Corrective Action Plan with CCLU, or any other CCLU issues that have not been resolved with a program/providers at a program.
 - i. Please note, if any of these situations are occurring, applicants can still apply for a GSQ Step, however, the review team is not held to the 90 day commitment to review and award a Quality Step. Once the BCDHSC hears from CCLU that the program is in compliance, the review team will begin the application review and award process as appropriate.
 - b. Submission of an incomplete GSQ application (incorrect percentage of credentials maintained, required trainings not documented, etc).
5. Who can I call for help with my NH QRIS: Granite Steps for Quality application?
 - a. Child Care Aware of NH offers resources for early care and education programs. Please call 603-578-1386, ext. 2532 or send an email to ccrta@snhs.org
 - b. ACROSS NH offers resources for Out-of-School Time programs. Please call 603-206-6848 or send an email to acrossnh@seresc.net
 - c. BCDHSC Credentialing Specialist, Annmarie Censullo, contact information: 603-271-4684 or CredentialMe@dhhs.nh.gov
 - d. BCDHSC Program Improvement Specialist, Andrea Foster, contact information: NHGSQ@dhhs.nh.gov

6. What are the important dates that I need to know?

For expired or current Licensed Plus (LP) programs that currently bill for NH Child Care Scholarship to continue receiving incentive funding without a lapse, the following two deadlines apply:

- All LP programs that expire *on or before* August 31, 2022 have until December 31, 2022 to be awarded.
- All LP programs who will expire *on or after* September 1, 2022 have until December 31, 2023 to be awarded.

All NAEYC Accredited programs that currently receive Child Care Scholarship incentive funding have until December 31, 2023 to be awarded.

Date	What	Things to Know
December 31, 2022	Deadline to have applied <i>and be awarded</i> for all LP programs with expiration dates prior to August 31, 2022	In order to not have a break in quality incentive funding, LP providers expired on or before August 31, 2022 must be awarded a Step in the new GSQ system by December 31, 2022.
September 30, 2023	Approximate application deadline for program to be awarded by December 31, 2023.	In order to not have a break in quality incentive funding all NAEYC Accredited providers and LP Providers with an expiration date on or after September 1, 2022 must be in the new GSQ system by December 31, 2023.
December 31, 2023	Deadline to apply and be awarded for all LP programs due for renewal on or after September 1, 2022 and for all accredited programs that receive funding for child care scholarship.	Licensed Plus designation ends. In order to continue receiving child care scholarship incentive funding, all LP and NAEYC Accredited programs must be awarded a GSQ Step by this date.

7. If I have more than one site, do I have to submit more than one GSQ application?

- Yes, each site (by license number) must submit a GSQ application if the site wants to participate in the GSQ system. Steps will be awarded by license number.

8. Once I am awarded a Step in GSQ, how long is it valid and how soon can I apply for a different Step?

- A GSQ Step is valid for three years. Programs should maintain the requirements for their achieved Step throughout the three year period. At time of renewal, providers will need to reapply and submit proof of having met the requirements.
- Once awarded a Step in GSQ, a program must remain at that Step for a minimum of one year.
- Providers can apply for a higher Step one year after receiving their Step designation.

9. How is information about Granite Steps for Quality programs shared with families?

- Families receive information about Granite Steps for Quality through the referral process by Child Care Aware of NH. The quality designation and Endorsement appear on Program Profiles in the New Hampshire Connections Information System (NHCIS). Families seeking referrals through Child Care Search will be able to view your quality status online.

10. What is the difference between an Assessor and a Coach? When/where are they used?

- Assessor: ERS Assessors will be assigned to a program applying for a Step 3 (if not Accredited or HS/EHS) or Step 4. The ERS Assessor will visit the program to assess the required number of classrooms.
- Coach: Practice-Based Coaches will work with individual practitioners within programs. Coaching takes place during approximately two-week-long cycles and over the course of 6 months.
- Assessors and Coaches will be assigned to GSQ programs by contractors on behalf of BCDHSC.
- Please note that for 2022, coaching is being piloted in the GSQ system and for 2023, programs applying for a Step 2 or higher will already have been working with a coach.

11. What if I don't have availability for the children who are eligible for NH Child Care Scholarship (CCS)?
 - a. Programs must be enrolled to receive children who are eligible for NH CCS and must accept them when enrollment space permits.

Quality Incentives

1. What is the timeline to be awarded a GQS Quality Step in order to submit my GSQ Quarterly Quality Invoice to BCDHSC and receive incentives?

# Quarterly Incentive	Date by which GSQ Quality Step Must be Awarded ¹	Quarterly Incentive "End of Quarter" Date Invoices must be sent to BCDHSC by this date.	Estimated Date by which Program may Expect to Receive Quarterly Incentive Payment ²
1	February 28	March 31	April 25
2	May 31	June 30	July 25
3	August 31	September 30	October 25
4	November 30	December 31	January 25 of new year

¹ "A program must be awarded their GSQ Quality Step at least 30 days before the end of the quarter in order to be eligible for that quarter's GSQ Quality Incentives. Programs that progress to a higher GSQ Quality Step during the quarter, but at least 30 days before the end of the quarter, will receive the funding amount associated with their new GSQ Quality Step".

² This timeframe is an estimate. BCDHSC will submit the request for quarterly payments to Finance within one week of the end of each quarter. Finance will process the payment requests and send to Accounts Payable to issue/mail a check to the program. It can take up to 25 days for programs to receive a check in the mail once submitted to finance.

2. Where can I find the Quarterly Quality Invoice to submit to the BCDHSC?
 - a. You can find the invoices (by program type) here: <https://www.nh-connections.org/providers/quality-care-matters/>
 - b. You will email your completed invoice to NHGSQ@dhhs.nh.gov following the timeline listed in question #2 above.

3. How can I spend my Quality Incentive money?
 - a. The Site Director is able to allocate funds as they see fit, providing that the money is spent on Quality Improvements. Things that would fall under the Quality Improvement umbrella include but are not limited to: materials for children, materials for staff, classroom furniture, playground equipment, building and grounds improvements, family events, staff bonuses, etc. Programs will be asked to report annually on how they allocated their Quality Funds.
 - b. The Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration has provided Allowable Usage Guide. It can be found here: [Guide-to-GSQ-Incentive-Funds-V1-9-9-22.pdf \(nh-connections.org\)](#)

4. Will annual reporting be required?
 - a. Yes, similarly to those receiving quality incentive payments for programs currently accepting children receiving Child Care Scholarship, there will be a reporting requirement included for programs that receive a GSQ Step.

A blank copy of the report, as well as instructions, and a sample report can be found here: [GSQ-Incentives.AE_Spreadsheet-9-9-22.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

Standard 1: Staff Qualifications

1. Who are "eligible" staff?

- a. Eligible staff for early childhood programs are lead teachers and associate teachers as defined by CCLU requirements. The staff member should be both qualified for, and acting as a lead or associate teacher.
 - b. For Out-of-School Time programs, eligible staff are group leaders, site directors, and site coordinators, as defined by CCLU requirements. The staff member should be both qualified and serving as a group leader, site director, or site coordinator.
 - c. Credentials must not be expiring within 90 days of GSQ application date (remember, the GSQ application review and approval process can take up to 90 days). The Credentialing Specialist will reach out to providers to request a credential renewal if a GSQ application is received with current credentials expiring with-in 90 days of GSQ application date.
2. I am an administrator and I also work in a classroom. I hold a current Administrator credential. Can I be counted towards BOTH an administrator and eligible staff for the required credential/training percentages?
 - a. In order to be counted in both categories, the administrator must be working in the classroom WITH children at least 50% of the time (This cannot be due to staff shortages. It must be ongoing as a part of the intended program structure).
 - b. The administrator will be required to hold BOTH an administrator and a teacher credential.
 - c. This is applicable for both Early Childhood and Out-of-School Time Programs.
 3. If somebody is an associate teacher by CCLU standards but operates as an assistant, does their associate status with licensing automatically make them eligible staff according to the rubrics?
 - a. For the purpose of GSQ, if the teacher meets the requirements for eligible staff by CCLU definition, then they count towards the eligible staff percentage requirement regardless of their position or title at your program.
 4. What about part time staff, summer only staff, or per diem teachers? They are Lead or Associate Teachers, but are not considered to be all-year staff, would they still be counted in my percentages?
 - a. ALL “eligible” (see question 1 in this section) staff employed by the program at the time of GSQ application count toward percentages, regardless of whether they are per diem, part time, seasonal, etc.

Standard 2: Learning Environments - Environment Rating Scales Pathway

1. Where can I learn more about ERS?
 - a. To find information about implementing ERS within your program, you can visit the “[Environment Rating Scales](#)” page of NH Connections if you are a family child care provider or an early care and education program. If you are an Out-of-School Time program, please visit [Welcome to NH’s Granite Steps for Quality](#) page on the ACROSS NH website.
2. What are the approved ERS Trainings?
 - a. Any [ERSI Training](#)
 - b. Family Child Care or early care and education programs may visit [Child Care Aware of NH](#) for information about their ERS training:
 - c. Out-of-School Time: You can find training information for ERS Overview: SACERS training here: <https://www.acrossnh.org/granite-steps-for-quality>
 - d. Trainings must be current (within the last three years from application date) to be counted.
3. Which ERS trainings should we complete?
 - a. Trainings must reflect ages served in the program. Lead Teachers should complete the ERS training most reflective of their classroom age group. The administrator(s) can take most applicable ERS training (Early Childhood or OST).

4. How many classrooms will be assessed and which ones?

At a Step 3, one third of your classrooms will be assessed. At a Step 4, one half of your classrooms will be assessed. In both scenarios, the assessments will be conducted to cover the range of ages you serve. If your program serves infants through school age, the assessments will take place in classrooms representing each of the three ERS tools.

Standard 2: Learning Environments - Pyramid Model Pathway

1. Can Out-of-School Time providers choose the Pyramid Model Pathway?

- a. There is no Pyramid Model Pathway for Out-of-School time programs. However, if your program serves both Early Childhood and Out-of-School Time, you may choose the Pyramid Model Pathway for your Early Childhood program and choose the ERS (SACERS-U) pathway for the Out-of-School Time component.

2. How am I assigned a Pyramid Model Coach?

- a. The Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration will work with our contracted partners to assign the coach and/or assessor as applicable.
- b. If you are not currently participating in Pyramid Model but wish to choose the Pyramid Model Pathway, please apply for Step 1 to begin the process.

3. Where can I access the tools for the Pyramid Model?

- a. The Program Coach assigned to your program will provide the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) and/or the Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS). You can also learn more about the scales by reading the fact sheets found here: [TPOT & TPITOS Fact Sheets](#)

4. How can I access the Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ)?

- a. Once awarded a Step 1, programs will be enrolled in a Readiness Series. Upon completion of the Readiness Series, a Program Coach will be assigned to work with your Leadership Team to complete the Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ). You can find the document and other helpful tools on the National Center on Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) here: <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/data/index.html>

5. How can I request a TPOT or TPITOS Observation for my program?

- a. At this Step requirement, your program will already be working with a Program Coach. The coach will be conducting ongoing observations in your program.
- b. BCDHSC will connect with your program coach for date of completed assessments.

6. How can I apply for Practice-Based Coaching for my program?

- a. Practice-Based Coaching is integrated into the GSQ for both Learning Environment pathways. It will automatically occur prior to Step 2 application, regardless of chosen pathway.

7. Since TPOTs/TPITOS are confidential documents, what documentation is needed to provide evidence?

- a. Your Program Coach will provide the BCDHSC with an attestation that the tools have been completed and the dates of completion.

Accredited Programs

1. What should I do if my accreditation is expiring soon?

- a. If your program intends to renew before your expiration date, continue with your renewal process. Apply for the intended GSQ Step and keep the Bureau of Child Development and Head Start

Collaboration informed of your pending accreditation visit. (This is a case by case basis, especially due to the pandemic). If there is a delay in your scheduled visit, please notify the Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration and we will work with you to achieve the Step for which you currently qualify.

- b. If your program does not intend to renew accreditation, apply for the Step that best fits your program structure.
2. My program is provisionally accredited. Can I be awarded a Step 3?
 - a. NAEYC Accredited and Provisionally Accredited Programs can apply to be awarded a Step 3. Programs must keep the BCDHSC informed of their Accreditation status, including expiration dates, renewal intentions, assessor visitation windows, etc.

Head Start/ Early Head Start

1. How would centers navigate having HS/EHS and child care classrooms in one building?
 - a. If you are primarily a center based non Head Start/ Early Head Start program, please use the *Center Based Early Childhood Programs* rubric on p. 15 of the [GSQ Publication](#).
 - b. Head Start/Early Head Start programs can choose to be cross walked at a Step 3 by providing the required documentation.
2. If my program has a Head Start classroom under my license, does that mean that the entire center would have to be at Step 3?
 - a. The Head Start and Early Start Head programs would have to have their own license in order to apply at Step 3, otherwise the program would apply using the Center Based application.

Out-of-School Time (OST) Programs OR Programs with an Out-of-School Time (OST) Population:

5. If my program's license is from 6 weeks- 12 years (both Early Childhood and Out-Of-School Time) what rubric do we complete?
 - a. If you serve both Early Childhood and OST age children, please honor your program's license and utilize BOTH the *Center Based Early Childhood Programs Rubric and Out-of-School Time Rubric* of the [GSQ Publication](#).
 - b. If you feel that your license does not best represent the ages you currently serve, or if you have questions regarding your license, please contact CCLU regarding further guidance.
 - c. If you have questions regarding your program structure or have already contacted CCLU to change your license for GSQ and wish to change your license back due to the updated guidance above, please email NHGSQ@dhhs.nh.gov and we will work with you and CCLU to fix your license as soon as possible.
6. We serve both populations (Early Childhood and OST). Can we apply for just our Early Education program?
 - a. No. Programs applying for a GSQ Step need to submit an application for their entire program as a whole. If you have questions regarding your individual program structure, please email NHGSQ@dhhs.nh.gov .
7. If I share staff between my Early Childhood and Out-of-School program, how will that effect my percentages?
 - a. Programs must meet the credentialing requirements stated on the rubrics for both Out-of-School Time and Early Childhood.
8. I usually have a summer Out-of-School Time program. However due to staffing shortages, I am not opening the summer program this year. Do I still need to apply using both an EC and OST rubric?

- a. You can apply for the program you are currently running. However, if at any time you reopen the summer program or another Out-Of-School Time program, you must reapply at that time using the correct rubric.

Endorsements

1. Where do I find the *Bringing the Protective Factor Framework to Life in your Work* training?
 - a. A free training can be found on NH Children's Trust*
 - i. First please visit: <https://www.nhchildrenstrust.org/strengthening-families-training>
 - ii. Next, click "learn more and register"
 - iii. This will redirect you to The Children's Trust Fund Alliance. Scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click on, "Visit ProSolutions Training"
 - iv. You will now find 1 free certificate (this does not yield a certificate at the end of the training). You can pay and receive a certificate to upload on your registry OR you can complete a self-study form and submit this on your registry (Self Study form can be found here: <https://www.nh-connections.org/providers/trainings-and-recorded-webinars/>).