



QUALITYstarsNY & Start with Stars FAQ for OCFS Child Care Deserts Grant RFA 1 & RFA 2 Awardees

General Information

What is QUALITYstarsNY?

[QUALITYstarsNY](#) is New York State's [Quality Rating and Improvement System](#) for early childhood programs. QUALITYstarsNY is designed to provide the support programs need to enhance the quality of early childhood education for New York's children and families. Programs participating in QUALITYstarsNY earn a rating of 1-5 Stars every three years and receive access to a range of resources to improve and sustain quality. The core focus of QUALITYstarsNY is to help early childhood programs in all regulated settings engage in continuous quality improvement so they can best serve young children and their families.

What is Start with Stars?

Start with Stars is a QUALITYstarsNY initiative designed, in part, to support newly licensed early childhood programs. Programs participating in Start with Stars have access to individualized support to help them create a foundation for success right from the start.

How Does Start with Stars Differ from QUALITYstarsNY?

The duration of participation in Start with Stars is short-term (6 months) while QUALITYstarsNY participation is ongoing. In Start with Stars, programs meet more frequently with their Quality Improvement Specialist. Start with Stars programs are not rated until they transition into QUALITYstarsNY, after which they have access to the full range of QUALITYstarsNY resources.

RFA 1 grant awardees are required to participate in Start with Stars whereas RFA 2 participants may participate if they meet one of the Start with Stars eligibility criteria.

Do I have to participate in QUALITYstarsNY / Start with Stars if I am awarded a Child Care Deserts Grant?

Yes, all Child Care Deserts Grant Awardees must participate in QUALITYstarsNY or its Start with Stars Initiative.

RFA 1 grant awardees are expected to participate in Start with Stars. They must start the application process for QUALITYstarsNY/Start with Stars within 30 days of their grant award date.

RFA 2 grant awardees are expected to participate in QUALITYstarsNY unless they meet the general eligibility criteria for Start with Stars. These programs would be eligible to participate in Start with Stars if they are either:

- A new program first licensed within the last year
- Have new program leadership

- Need support to address challenges related to meeting licensing requirements

If the program does not meet these criteria, they will participate in QUALITYstarsNY.

(RFA 1) Could my Child Care Deserts Grant program choose to participate in QUALITYstarsNY instead of Start with Stars?

No, grant awardees are expected to participate in Start with Stars before joining QUALITYstarsNY. After six months of building capacity to engage in continuous quality improvement, programs will transition into QUALITYstarsNY to continue their quality improvement journey.

How can I learn more about QUALITYstarsNY and Start with Stars?

We encourage Child Care Deserts Grant awardees to attend one of our general QUALITYstarsNY Information Sessions to learn more about QUALITYstarsNY and what to expect as a participant. Information Sessions are hosted virtually and offered in both English and Spanish. Visit our [Information Session page](#) to register to join us for an upcoming session.

What is The Aspire Registry?

The Aspire Registry is New York's statewide data platform designed to support the early childhood and school age workforce. It aids in improving the quality of early childhood education by helping individuals find and track high-quality professional development. The online system allows teachers, assistant teachers, after-school professionals, directors, and trainers to track their education, professional development, training, and career goals and find post-professional development opportunities. Both QUALITYstarsNY and The Aspire Registry are coordinated by the [New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute](#).

Watch [this short video](#) to learn more about Aspire and how your program staff will benefit from joining.

How is my participation in QUALITYstarsNY / Start with Stars connected to The Aspire Registry?

QUALITYstarsNY and Start with Stars participants have the added benefit of becoming members of The Aspire Registry. The qualifications and experience that staff enter into Aspire and verify with supporting documentation is used to earn points for certain Standards in the QUALITYstarsNY rating process.

Applying for QUALITYstarsNY / Start with Stars

How do I apply for QUALITYstarsNY / Start with Stars?

We've recently launched a new application process that should make it easier than ever to apply to QUALITYstarsNY / Start with Stars. Visit our [application webpage](#) to get started with the process.

When do I need to apply to participate in Start with Stars (RFA 1) or QUALITYstarsNY (RFA 2) for my Child Care Deserts Grant program?

Grant awardees have **30 days from their grant award date to start the application** for QUALITYstarsNY / Start with Stars. Awardees **must complete the application process within 90 days of their grant award date** to meet their second benchmark for QUALITYstarsNY / Start with Stars participation.

Is there a separate application for QUALITYstarsNY and Start with Stars?

No, the application is the same to apply for either QUALITYstarsNY or Start with Stars.

If you are an RFA 1 awardee or an RFA 2 awardee eligible to participate in Start with Stars, be sure to check the applicable box ("New Program" for RFA 1 awardees) under the Start with Stars eligibility section of the application so we can identify you as a Start with Stars program.

Do I have to join The Aspire Registry before applying for QUALITYstarsNY/Start with Stars?

Through our new application process, you do not need to join The Aspire Registry before applying for QUALITYstarsNY / Start with Stars.

If you are not yet a member of Aspire: by completing the QUALITYstarsNY / Start with Stars application process you will automatically be creating your Individual Profile and Organization Profile in Aspire. After completing the QUALITYstarsNY application, **please keep an eye out for follow up information to support you with your next steps to complete your Individual Profile and manage your Organization Profile.** Your Organization Profile will have to be approved by Aspire before QUALITYstarsNY can review your application for selection for either QUALITYstarsNY or Start with Stars.

QUALITYstarsNY Participation

What can I expect when my program participates in QUALITYstarsNY?

Continuous quality improvement is the core focus of QUALITYstarsNY and the support we provide to early childhood programs. When your program joins, you will be partnered with a dedicated Quality Improvement Specialist (QI Specialist) with expertise in early childhood education and program administration, who will advise and support you throughout your participation. You will meet regularly with your QI Specialist through on-site meetings and maintain ongoing communications.

All QUALITYstarsNY participants are on a path to excellence and earn a Star Rating of 1-5 Stars. Once you complete the rating process, you will partner with your QI Specialist to identify opportunities for improvement using the research-based QUALITYstarsNY Standards as a roadmap for your continuous quality improvement journey. You'll set the goals you want to achieve for your program and have access to a range of resources and support to achieve your goals. With access to ongoing support and resources, programs at all Star levels enhance and sustain their quality over time. Approximately every 3 years, you will complete the re-rating process to reflect on and celebrate your program's progress!

What resources are available to QUALITYstarsNY programs?

Programs participating in QUALITYstarsNY receive:

- Ongoing support from their Quality Improvement Specialist
- Data-driven assessment through the rating process to inform quality improvement planning
- Professional development opportunities and scholarships for staff
- Access to high quality classroom materials and furnishings to enhance your program's learning environment
- And more!

How long does participation in QUALITYstarsNY last?

Child Care Deserts Grant programs are expected to participate throughout the duration of the grant term. However, they are welcome to continue to participate in QUALITYstarsNY once the grant term ends. In general, programs may participate for as long as they choose to be a part of QUALITYstarsNY and access the benefits of participation.

(RFA 2) If I'm already participating in QUALITYstarsNY, how will this impact my benchmarks for the Child Care Deserts Grant

If you are already participating and awarded an RFA 2 grant, QUALITYstarsNY will assess where your program is in the participation process using the Participation Benchmarks Guidelines and you will be informed by your Quality Improvement Specialist where you are in the Benchmark Timeline. If you continue to meet your deadlines as reflected in the QUALITYstarsNY data systems, either for the rating process or your Quality Improvement Plan, you will be on track to meet your QUALITYstarsNY Participation Benchmarks for the OCFS grant requirements.

Start with Stars Participation

How will my program benefit from participating in Start with Stars?

As a Start with Stars participant, your program will be paired with a Quality Improvement Specialist (QI Specialist) with expertise in the field of early childhood education. Your QI Specialist will provide individualized support to help your new program establish a strong foundation, rooted in best practices in early childhood education. After six months, your program will transition into QUALITYstarsNY. After earning their QUALITYstarsNY Star Rating, your program will have access to the full range of QUALITYstarsNY's support and resources to enhance and sustain your program quality.

What will I be expected to do as a Start with Stars participant?

As a Start with Stars participant, you are expected to meet every 2- 4 weeks with your QI Specialist on-site at your program and regularly communicate with them via email and/or phone between meetings. Partner with your QI Specialist to complete foundational tasks that will build your program's capacity to engage in continuous quality improvement.

How long does participation in Start with Stars last?

Your program will participate in Start with Stars for six months, after which you'll transition into QUALITYstarsNY.

Am I required to transition into QUALITYstarsNY after participating in Start with Stars as part of the Child Care Deserts Grant?

Yes, RFA 1 programs and RFA 2 programs eligible to participate in Start with Stars must transition into QUALITYstarsNY after completing 6 months in Start with Stars and participate in QUALITYstarsNY for the duration of their grant term.