



National Quality Mentoring System (NQMS) MENTOR Program Readiness Toolkit

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL QUALITY MENTORING SYSTEM (NQMS) PROCESS

Thank you for your interest in the National Quality Mentoring System (NQMS), the only free online tool at the national level to self-assess mentoring programs. This system is managed by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership and our network of state and local affiliates. By signing up for the NQMS, you're helping your program show commitment to quality improvement, as well as strengthening our field by aligning your work with best practices for mentoring.

The goal of the National Quality Mentoring System (NQMS) is to provide mentoring programs with a system for assessing themselves against National Quality Mentoring Standards based on the fourth edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*, as well as opportunities to receive a quality designation and training and technical assistance to support improvements over time.

The NQMS assessment is based heavily on the latest mentoring policies, practices, experiences, and research in the fourth edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice*, the foundational document produced by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, which serves as the standard for mentoring best practices. In many ways, NQMS has been built by our mentoring field, for our mentoring field.

The result is a 92 item self-assessment tool that programs use to rate their current practice and identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. For each item, the program notes whether the best practice is being implemented or not and rates the implementation on a five-point scale. After the initial assessment is complete, you will work with your state or local MENTOR affiliate to create an improvement plan based on your responses, and set achievable goals that will improve the quality of your program and its alignment with mentoring best practices.

The result of this information gathering is a comprehensive picture of where your program feels it currently stands in terms of practice. Note that the emphasis here is not on program outcomes, but rather *program practices* that are predictive of positive outcomes. The NQMS is focused on *how* and *how well* a program does its work, not the ultimate outcomes of that work.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

In this NQMS Program Readiness Toolkit, you will find documents and resources that will help you prepare for the NQMS assessment. After reviewing these documents, talk with your state or local MENTOR affiliate about any remaining questions you have or supports you may need before beginning the NQMS process.



MENTOR

THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

PROGRAM READINESS QUESTIONS

Programs should work with their state or local MENTOR affiliate to assess their readiness for the NQMS process, by discussing the below questions. The answers to these questions will help inform state or local MENTOR affiliate about program's readiness for this process and the timing that is right.

About Your Mentoring Program

What position do you have at your organization?

How long have you been in your position?

How long has the mentoring program been operating?

How many mentors and mentees do you currently serve?

Are your mentors paid staff or volunteers?

About NQMS

Why are you interested in NQMS? What will you do with your results?

What are you most excited about? What worries you?

Do you have time in the next month to spend 8-12 hours learning the NQMS process and completing the questionnaire?

Are you and your program staff committed to working on your workplan during the next year?
(How much time should they dedicate per month? 4 hours)

Which other staff members do you plan to involve?



REGISTERING YOUR PROGRAM IN THE MENTORING CONNECTOR

If you haven't done so already, the first step to completing the NQMS process is to register your program in the [Mentoring Connector](#), the only national database of mentoring programs. The Mentoring Connector is a free service that helps quality youth mentoring programs across the country recruit more local volunteers while greatly increasing visibility for their organizations. Programs can apply to be listed for this free service, and prospective mentors can search by zip code for opportunities. Read more about the Mentoring Connector [here](#). **Registering your program in the Mentoring Connector means that you are actively recruiting volunteer mentors for your program and are able to respond to volunteer inquiries, so please be sure that this is the case for your program before you apply.**

Once you submit your program to the Mentoring Connector, your application is reviewed internally against the [Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring](#), which we use to ensure that the database consists of quality programs with research-based, safe practices. Please allow two weeks for review, and then you will receive an email with your results or requesting additional information about your program.

To submit your program listing:

- Go to <https://connect.mentoring.org/admin>
- Click the Add a Program button on the right side of the screen
- A pop-up window will appear asking whether you already have Program Administrator login credentials. If you've never registered a program with the Mentoring Connector before, click "no." If you have, click "yes" and use that information to log in.
- Supply the requested program information, then click Submit.
- Keep these guidelines in mind as you fill out your application:
 - **Write in complete sentences, and provide adequate detail.** Your Program Description and Mentor Description are shown publicly to prospective mentors.
 - **Think through your contact email addresses.** It's important to keep the Program Administrator and Volunteer Coordinator/Contact emails up to date. If staff move on and your Mentoring Connector record is not updated, volunteer referrals won't reach you. If at all possible, use a 'generic' email address for the volunteer contact email – something like info@yourprogram.org or mentor@yourprogram.org. **This is especially important when your volunteer contact person is a VISTA or other temporary employee.**
- Please allow two weeks for your state or local MENTOR affiliate to review your listing. You will receive an email with your results or requesting additional information.
- Have questions? Check out [this FAQ sheet](#), contact your state or local MENTOR affiliate, or reach out to Connector@mentoring.org for assistance.

NQMS DESIGNATION & BADGING GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMS

With consideration to organizational capacity, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership believes in the importance of recognizing programs who commit to continuous quality improvement by initiating in NQMS work. There are two badges and designations that may be awarded to programs during each 3 year NQMS cycle. Because NQMS is about continuous, ongoing quality improvement efforts, to maintain badges beyond this 3 year period, programs must continue to engage in NQMS work (See **When Does a Program’s Designation and Badge Expire?**). Upon fulfillment of the below criteria, MENTOR affiliates will award programs with a “*Step 1: Initiated in NQMS*” designation badge:

- Program has completed NQMS self-assessment and submitted it for review.
- Program has completed a review meeting with their MENTOR affiliate.
- MENTOR affiliate has approved the self-assessment.
- Program has collaborated with their MENTOR affiliate to develop an Improvement and Innovation Plan (IIP) and has completed a Statement of Accuracy form, signifying their commitment to completing improvements on at least three identified goals.

Upon receiving this designation, programs will have the ability to download the “*Step 1: Initiated in NQMS*” designation badge from the online tool, and can display it on their websites and materials within the specified timeframe (see **When Does a Program’s Designation and Badge Expire?**). This will also trigger an “*NQMS Step 1*” icon to be added into the program’s Mentoring Connector profile, indicating their commitment to NQMS to volunteers, families and others searching for the program through this public database.

Step 1: Initiated in NQMS designation badge



NQMS Step 1 Mentoring Connector icon



To further acknowledge programs for progressing in quality through the completion of quality improvement work, programs may be awarded with a second NQMS designation badge, “*Step 2: Progressing in NQMS*,” after completing 3-5 quality improvement goals in their Innovation and Improvement Plans (IIPs) and completing accompanying documentation in the online tool.

Upon fulfillment of the below criteria, MENTOR affiliates will award programs with a “*Step 2 Progressing in NQMS*” designation and badge:

- Program fulfills all “Step 1” criteria.
- Program has completed 3-5 quality improvement goals specified in their Innovation and Improvement Plan (IIP).
- Program has updated the NQMS online tool to reflect these improvements, by noting that their plans are complete, and submitting any related updates to their assessment responses (Please see Program User Guide for detailed instructions on how to do this).
- MENTOR affiliate has reviewed the program’s documentation of their completed goals and agrees that the program has completed them satisfactorily. MENTOR affiliate has approved assessment updates reflecting the completion of these goals.

Programs will have the ability to download the “*Step 2: Progressing in NQMS*” badge onto their NQMS dashboard, which will also trigger an “*NQMS Step 2*” icon to be added to the program’s Mentoring Connector profile.

Step 2: Progressing in NQMS designation badge



NQMS Step 2 Mentoring Connector icon



LANGUAGE PROGRAMS MAY USE WITH BADGE

Mentoring programs can place the “*Step 1: Initiated in NQMS*” badge on their website with the following description:



[PROGRAM NAME] is committed to meeting quality standards for mentoring that are safe and effective. We strive to follow the nationally recognized best practices, known as the [*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*](#), 4th Edition, and established by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, to support quality youth mentoring relationships. To achieve these standards, [PROGRAM NAME] has initiated the 2-step National Quality Mentoring System (NQMS) [process, a national continuous quality improvement process for mentoring programs](#), by completing a quality self-assessment and review facilitated by [MENTOR AFFILIATE NAME – WITH HYPERLINK TO AFFILIATE HOMEPAGE OR NQMS PAGE], and developing an innovation and improvement plan to promote continuous quality improvement and alignment with evidence-based practices for mentoring. Learn more about the NQMS process [here](#).

The badge itself should hyperlink to:

http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/national_quality_mentoring_system

Mentoring programs can place the “*Step 2: Progressing in NQMS*” badge on their website with the following description:



[PROGRAM NAME] is committed to meeting quality standards for mentoring that are safe and effective. We strive to follow the nationally recognized best practices, known as the [*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*](#), 4th Edition, and established by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, to support quality youth mentoring relationships. To achieve these standards, [PROGRAM NAME] is engaged in the 2-step National Quality Mentoring System (NQMS) [process, a national continuous quality improvement process for mentoring programs](#), by completing a quality self-assessment and review facilitated by [MENTOR AFFILIATE NAME – WITH HYPERLINK TO AFFILIATE HOMEPAGE OR NQMS PAGE], and by completing quality



improvement and innovation goals to further align its practices with evidence-based standards for mentoring programs. Learn more about the NQMS process [here](#).

The badge itself should hyperlink to:

http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/national_quality_mentoring_system

WHAT THE NQMS BADGE IS NOT

Because the NQMS promotes continuous quality improvement and is not an evaluation tool or certification program, NQMS designations and badges will be awarded based on a program's commitment to and actions taken to assess and improve quality, not a program's score on the self-assessment. "In practice" and "out of practice" items are used to inform the quality improvement coaching you receive from your MENTOR affiliate reviewer, not to evaluate or compare your program against others. This distinction is important for programs to understand as they explain the meaning of their badge to internal and external audiences, including prospective volunteers and funders. You are encouraged to use NQMS reports on "in practice" and "out of practice" items to inform your internal quality improvement process and track your improvements over time.

WHEN DOES A PROGRAM'S DESIGNATION & BADGE EXPIRE?

"Step 1: Initiated in NQMS" AND "Step 2: Progressing in NQMS" designation badges have an expiration timeframe of up to three years maximum from the time of the NQMS review.

This requires programs to re-engage in NQMS work in order to uphold the appropriate NQMS designation badges. Program reengagement is also important to help maintain an accurate data about program practices over time.

After three years have passed since the review meeting, in order to remain engaged in the NQMS process, programs will agree complete a new NQMS self-assessment to re-evaluate their practices with the NQMS tool. Programs will also re-initiate into a new 1-3 year timeframe of committing to complete a new set of continuous quality improvement goals as well as creating new or updating the existing goals listed in the IIP.

If programs that have the "Step 1" designation still have not completed "Step 2" criteria by the 3 year time limit, they must still complete a new self-assessment and restart the process. Even though "Step 2" designation may be awarded to programs at varying timeframes depending on their timeline for completing quality improvement goals, programs must still restart the process and re-enter "Step 1" after 3 years, regardless of how long they have had a "Step 2" designation for. It is important to remember that NQMS is truly a continuous improvement cycle, and that restarting *Step 1* is not a "de-motion" but rather a way to continuously reassess one's practices over time.

To prevent lapses in designation and badging, programs are encouraged to remain engaged with their MENTOR affiliate on a continuous basis to ensure they are meeting "Step 1" or "Step 2" criteria, depending on their stage in the process. The MENTOR affiliate reviewer is available to provide ongoing training and technical assistance as you progress through this process of continuous quality improvement.



At your review, discuss the date of your next assessment with your MENTOR affiliate reviewer, and record this date so you can prepare to complete a new assessment at that time. Be sure to reach out to your MENTOR affiliate before this date – they may also reach out to you. Your MENTOR affiliate will then give you access to a new assessment in the online tool. If you do not respond or choose not to participate in the NQMS process again, your NQMS badge will no longer be valid after the date of your next assessment passes, and your badge must be removed from your website and other program materials. You can reach out to your affiliate again if/when you are ready to engage in your next self-assessment.

NOTE: Given the varying capacity of mentoring programs, MENTOR recommends for Affiliates to use discretion when deciding the timeframe in which mentoring programs should reassess e.g. if a mentoring program needs to reassess before three years.

MENTORING CONNECTOR SEARCH PRIORITY

The NQMS online tool is embedded within the Mentoring Connector volunteer referral database. By showing your engagement in “*Step 1*” or “*Step 2*” of NQMS on your program’s Mentoring Connector profile, MENTOR is able to prioritize your mentoring program in the search feature of the Mentoring Connector, to highlight your program’s commitment to quality improvement to potential volunteers, service users and other stakeholders. After your MENTOR affiliate awards your program with a “*Step 1*” or “*Step 2*” NQMS designation, an icon will appear on your profile, allowing your program to receive priority for Mentoring Connector searches in your area above programs without this designation.

ARE THERE ADVANCED NQMS DESIGNATIONS OR BADGES A PROGRAM CAN RECEIVE?

Currently, the “*Step 1*” and “*Step 2*” designations described above - which recognize programs’ commitment to and actions taken toward quality improvement - are the only national designations available to programs throughout their ongoing engagement with the NQMS process. Due to the diversity of mentoring programs nationwide, MENTOR is currently working with our affiliates to explore options for additional national designations based on programs’ self-assessment scores and/or their completion of goals, and to assess the potential implications of such badges for our diverse stakeholders across the country.



DOCUMENT UPLOAD REQUIREMENTS

Some questions on the NQMS self-assessment will require you to upload documents to support your answers. Below are a list of questions that require document uploads. It is helpful to locate and secure these documents as you prepare for the NQMS assessment so you will be ready to complete it more seamlessly once you begin.

A3. Does your program have a strategic plan or specific guiding document?

C8. Does your program have a staffing structure that is appropriate for your mentoring program scale and model? Please upload your organizational chart.

H24. Does your program have a marketing or communications plan?
Please upload your communications plan

J29. Does your program have a mentor recruitment plan? Please upload your mentor recruitment plan

K34. Does your program have a mentee recruitment plan? Please upload your mentee recruitment plan.

T78. Does your program have a logic model?

U85. Does your program have an evaluation plan for collecting outcome and process data?
Please upload your evaluation plan here



NQMS SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Below is the full list of questions that you will be asked during the online NQMS self-assessment. You will be asked to indicate whether each of these items is in practice or not, and rate how well your program is currently implementing that practice on a scale of 1 to 5. Reviewing these questions in advance will assist you in completing the NQMS online self-assessment smoothly when you are ready, and in identifying the correct staff to assist you in answering these questions.

A. Mentoring Program Design

- A1. Does your program have a mission statement?
- A2. Does your program have goals and objectives for its services and activities, such as in a theory of change?
- A3. Does your program have a strategic plan or specific guiding document?
- A4. Does your program have a manual that documents written policies and procedures?
- A5. Does your program have a process to regularly review and continuously improve program policies and procedures?

B. Leadership Structure

- B6. Does your program have a Board of Directors or Advisory Committee that operates with clear roles and responsibilities and meets on a regularly scheduled basis?
- B7. Does your program recruit Board of Directors or Advisory Committee members with backgrounds who reflect program participants and bring needed experience and resources?

C. Mentoring Program Staffing

- C8. Does your program have a staffing structure that is appropriate for your mentoring program scale and model?
- C9. Does your program recruit and hire program staff, paid or unpaid, who have appropriate skills and experience for their role?
- C10. Does your program have systems to support, recognize, and retain mentoring program staff?

D. Professional Development

- D11. Does your program provide orientation and initial training for all new staff?
- D12. Does your program provide opportunities for staff to participate in internal and external networking activities?



D13. Does your program provide opportunities for ongoing training and development such as conferences, seminars, and/or online coursework?

D14. Does your program have a system to regularly review staff members' performance, progress, and development?

E. Financial Management and Resource Development

E15. Does your program have a detailed annual program budget?

E16. Does your program have a formal accounting system?

E17. Does your program have a resource development plan?

E18. Does your program comply with ethical, professional and legal standards related to fundraising?

F. Partnership Development

F19. Does your program build and sustain partnerships and collaborations with other organizations that are strategically beneficial?

F20. Does your program sustain partnerships with other local service providers to build a referral network for your mentors, families, and mentees?

F21. Does your program develop Memorandums of Understanding with all formal partners?

G. Information Management

G22. Does your program follow state and federal guidelines related to the collection, use, storage, dissemination and destruction of program data?

G23. Does your program have a system, such as a database, for accessing and managing information about program participants?

H. Communications

H24. Does your program have a marketing or communications plan?

H25. Does your program produce an annual report to communicate program accomplishments and needs to program participants, stakeholders, and community?



I. Advocacy

I26. Does your program build awareness at the community level to encourage greater support of youth mentoring as an intervention and prevention strategy?

I27. Does your program stay informed and support local, state, and federal pro-mentoring policies and funding?

I28. Does your program adhere to local, state, and federal regulations regarding advocacy and lobbying activities?

J. Mentor Recruitment

J29. Does your program have a mentor recruitment plan?

J30. Does your program have a publically available mentor job description or document that describes the mentor role and clarifies eligibility?

J31. Does your program realistically portraying the benefits, practices, and challenges of mentoring in the program in all recruitment activities?

J32. Does your program utilize multiple strategies to recruit mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals of the program?

J33. Does your program encourage and equip mentors in assisting with recruitment efforts?

K. Mentee Recruitment

K34. Does your program have a mentee recruitment plan?

K35. Does your program have publicly available eligibility requirements for mentees with an emphasis on youth whose needs best match your services?

K36. Does your program realistically portray the benefits, practices, and challenges of participating in the program in all recruitment activities with youth and parent(s)/guardians?

L. Mentor Screening

L37. Does your program have established criteria for accepting and disqualifying potential mentors?



L38. Does your program require mentors to complete a written application that include questions to assess their safety and suitability for mentoring youth?

L39. Does your program conduct at least one face to face interview with potential mentors?

L40. Does your program conduct a comprehensive criminal background check on potential mentors, at a minimum searching a national criminal records database, along with sex offender and child abuse registries, and when relevant driving records?

L41. Does your program conduct at least two reference checks (personal and/or professional) on potential mentors?

L42. Does your program regularly examine screening tools and practices and support any additional screening processes relevant to the mentoring program?

L43. Does your program require mentors to agree in writing to the expectations of the program and the match, including minimum commitment and frequency?

L44. Does your program ensure screening processes follow ethical, professional and legal standards with regards to information sharing and confidentiality?

M. Mentee Eligibility

M45. Does your program have established criteria for accepting and mentees into the program and making referrals when relevant?

M46. Does your program require mentees and/or parent(s)/guardians to complete applications or enrollment forms that include informed consent agreeing to participation?

M47. Does your program require mentees and/or parent(s)/guardians to agree in writing to the expectations for the program and the match, including minimum commitment and frequency?

N. Mentor Preparation and Training

N48. Does your program provide at least two hours of pre-match, in person mentor training that prepares mentors to be successful in their role?

N49. Does your program inform mentors about program rules and risk management policies and ensure understanding?

N50. Does your program use training practices and resources that are in alignment with empirical research?



O. Preparation for Mentees and/or Families

O51. Does your program provide training to mentees and/or parent(s)/guardians that prepares them to be successful in the program?

O52. Does the program inform mentees and/or parent(s)/guardians about program rules and risk management policies and ensure understanding?

P. Matching Process

P53. Does your program have established criteria for matching that consider relationship goals as well as personal characteristics of the mentor and mentee?

P54. Does your program prepare mentors, mentees, and parent(s)/guardians when appropriate, for their initial meeting after the match determination has been made, such as by sharing information about the proposed match?

P55. Does your program arrange and document an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee, as well as a parent/guardians when appropriate, facilitated by program staff?

P56. Does your program have the mentor, mentee, and parent(s)/guardian when appropriate, sign a commitment agreement at the initial meeting consenting to the program's rules and requirements and risk management policies?

Q. Supervision and Monitoring

Q57. Does your program check in with mentors twice a month for the first month of the match and monthly thereafter (or at a consistent interval relevant to the nature of the program and risk level of participants; in-person at least once per year)?

Q58. Does your program check in with mentees twice a month for the first month of the match and monthly thereafter (or at a consistent interval relevant to the nature of the program and risk level of participants; in-person at least once per year)?

Q59. Does your program check in with another responsible adult in the mentee's life (e.g., parent, guardian, teacher, or counselor) at a minimum of twice a month in the first month of the match and once a month thereafter (or at an interval relevant to the nature of the program and risk level of participants; in-person at least once per year)?

Q60. Does your program use a standardized protocol at each contact that collects valuable information on mentor and mentee activities, safety, and relationship quality?



Q61. Does your program document all contact with participants and the information gathered (dates, length, and description of mentoring activities, at a minimum) in an appropriate format accessible by relevant staff?

Q62. Does your program use a relationship quality survey or questionnaire to assess the quality of the match at least once during each program year?

Q63. Does your program evaluate at set intervals when a match should be “renewed” or if the match needs to be formally closed?

Q64. Does your program have a process for ensuring that monitoring procedures are adhered to and participants are contacted as required?

R. Match Support & Recognition

R65. Does your program provide ongoing training opportunities for mentors throughout the year?

R66. Does your program offer ongoing training opportunities for mentees and/or parent(s)/guardians throughout the year?

R67. Does your program provide mentors, mentees, and parent(s)/guardians when appropriate, with access to relevant resources and expert advice from program staff to help address opportunities and challenges in their mentoring relationship as they arise?

R68. Does your program actively solicit feedback from mentors, mentees, and parent(s)/guardians when appropriate, regarding their experiences with program processes and participating in the program?

R69. Does your program offer opportunities for mentors to meet each other, share ideas, and provide support?

R70. Does your program offer match activities or ideas for activities for mentors and mentees?

R71. Does your program host or arrange one or more group activities per year that bring matches and families together, when relevant?

R72. Does your program regularly recognize and thank program participants for their contributions, such as an end-of-year celebration event?

S. Closure



S73. Does your program manage both anticipated and unanticipated match closures, including a process when one party is unwilling or unable to participate?

S74. Does your program conduct exit interviews with mentors?

S75. Does your program conduct exit interviews with mentees and parent(s)/guardians if appropriate?

S76. Does your program have established criteria and procedures for re-matching mentors and mentees?

S77. Does your program document all match closures in the program's information management system, with closed matches no longer reported as active in reporting and evaluation?

T. Expected Outcomes

T78. Does your program have a logic model?

T79. Does your program have identified outcomes for mentees that reflect the goals of the program?

T80. Does your program have identified outcomes for mentors that reflect the goals of the program?

T81. Does your program have identified indicators of success for your mentee outcomes?

T82. Does your program have identified indicators of success for your mentor outcomes?

T83. Does your program have identified program inputs and processes essential to achieving your goals?

T84. Does your program have identified indicators of success for your identified program processes?

U. Data Collection & Measurement

U85. Does your program have an evaluation plan for collecting outcome and process data?

U86. Does your program have established and accessible sources of data for measuring program processes, such as program records, mentoring logs, financial records, etc.?



U87. Does your program have valid and reliable data collection tools for measuring mentor and mentee outcomes, such as surveys, interviews, or observations?

U88. Does your program consistently collect data related to implementation of program procedures (such as match records, staff supervision and monitoring records, financial records) in accordance with your evaluation plan?

U89. Does your program consistently collect data related to participant outcomes (such as surveys, interviews or observations) in accordance with your evaluation plan?

V. Data Analysis & Use

V90. Does your program analyze process and outcome data at least once a year to identify trends, progress toward program goals and objectives, and implementation issues?

V91. Does your program use findings from data analysis to refine program practices?

V92. Does your program share your evaluation findings with program stakeholders including participants, staff, Board members, funders, etc.?