



## Measure Applications Partnership (MAP) Rural Health Technical Expert Panel (TEP) Conference Call

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The National Quality Forum (NQF) convened the MAP Rural Health Technical Expert Panel (TEP) for a conference call on February 27, 2019. The TEP discussed the comments received during the 21-day public and NQF-member commenting period and finalized their recommendations to address the low-case volume challenge faced by rural providers.

### Welcome and Review of Meeting Objectives

Karen Johnson, NQF Senior Director, welcomed the TEP to the call. She reviewed the following meeting objectives:

- Discuss the draft report comments from NQF members and the public
- Finalize the recommendations on the low case-volume challenge faced by rural providers
- Provide additional guidance for finalizing the project report

### Discuss Comments, Finalize Recommendations, and Discuss Any Additional Changes to the Draft Report

Ms. Johnson presented comments received by NQF on the MAP Rural Health TEP draft report. A brief summary of the TEP's feedback is provided below, organized according to the sections of the report.

#### *TEP Recommendations*

- There is no need to change the order of recommendations or otherwise emphasize one over another.

#### *Borrowing Strength*

- Add language early in the report to articulate the general principle that estimates derived by borrowing strength are not simply substitutes for estimates that can be calculated when low case-volume is not an issue—and therefore, the same comparisons and interpretations may not be appropriate.
- Language should clarify that when borrowing strength, particularly from other providers, data are not being combined per se, but rather data from other providers are being used to help inform estimates for providers with low case-volume. The availability of data can guide how information is pooled, although there may be policy or other content drivers that also influence what or how much data are pooled.
- In considering a comment questioning whether true provider performance is mis-represented when the borrowing strength approach is used, the TEP noted that performance is mis-represented when based on very small sample sizes.
- Clarify that volume is one of many shrinkage target options; the TEP is not recommending volume as the only, or best, shrinkage target.

- Add language to clarify that the decision of whether or how to pool data is purpose driven. For example, data may be pooled differently for providers in the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) program than it would be in a different program.
- The idea of borrowing strength in this report is not specific to a type of data source (i.e., there is no recommendation to use claims data instead of data from electronic health records, as there is no universal advantage of one over the other).

#### *Report Exceedance Probabilities*

- Additional testing and education should be included as a part of this recommendation to ensure its use achieves the desired result – better informed consumers and providers.

#### *Explore Nonparametric Alternatives*

- This recommendation will remain in the report but potentially be moved to the “Recommendations for Future Activities and Research” section.

#### *Recognize Potential for Downstream Unintended Consequences*

- Add language recommending use of a feedback loop.

#### *Recommendations for Future Activities and Research*

- The recommendations in this section are not listed in order of importance; however, we may be able to sub-divide the recommendations (e.g., data vs. policy; short-term vs. long-term)
- Clarify the potential steps that might be included when exploring structural characteristics as shrinkage targets.
- Include an idea for an example simulation study.

#### *Recommendations Regarding the Mechanics of the Measure Calculation*

- Bayesian approaches are generic and do not always include borrowing strength; therefore, it makes sense to reword the footnote.

#### *Ratio Measures*

- Add the word “help” to indicate that this approach may “help” circumvent the low case-volume challenge.

In addition to discussing the public and member comments, the TEP discussed whether to include a case study drafted by one of the TEP members. Ultimately, the TEP agreed that the case study would not be a helpful addition to the report.

### **NQF Member and Public Comment**

No member or public comments were received.

### **Next Steps**

NQF will finalize the project report based on the feedback from the TEP on the post-comment call. The final report will be available on March 29.