



Best Practices for Developing and Testing Risk Adjustment Models Technical Expert Panel

Background

NQF seeks to support the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) strategic goals of improving health delivery and accountability by linking payment to quality of care, generally known as value-based purchasing (VBP). For VBP to be successful, patients need accurate and reliable information on provider performance to make informed decisions. In addition, providers need comprehensive, reliable, and timely information to make quality care decisions that result in improved outcomes for patients while being held accountable for those outcomes in a fair and comparable manner. To level the playing field, risk adjustment methods have been applied to many measures, but not all, and not in a standardized method across measures. Measure developers have long expressed a need for technical guidance on developing and testing social and clinical risk adjustment models and the appropriateness of a standardized risk adjustment framework.

Risk adjusting measures to account for differences in patient health status and clinical factors (e.g., comorbidities, severity of illness) that are present at the start of care has been widely accepted and implemented. However, the increased use of outcome and resource use measures in payment models and public reporting programs has raised concerns regarding the adequacy and fairness of the risk adjustment methodologies used in these measures, especially as it relates to functional status and social risk factors such as income, education, social support, neighborhood deprivation, and rurality. Some clinical risk factors, like functional status, have been under-utilized, but may warrant broader consideration since they may mediate the relationship between social risk, quality outcomes, and resource use.

In this CMS-funded work, NQF will first conduct an environmental scan of data sources used for risk adjustment; functional, clinical, or social risk factors available for testing; and approaches to conceptual and statistical methods for risk adjustment. This environmental scan will benefit from deep expertise in reviewing existing risk-adjusted measures and programs. NQF will also develop Technical Guidance for measure developers that includes best practices on when and how to adjust for functional, clinical, and social risk factors in measure development and the appropriateness of a standard risk adjustment framework.

Technical Expert Panel Charge

NQF will convene a multi-stakeholder Technical Expert Panel (TEP) over the next 24-months to provide input on the current state of risk adjustment for social and functional status in measurement, best practices for social and functional status-related risk adjustment, the appropriateness of a standard risk adjustment framework, and the development of technical guidance for measure developers.

The TEP will be responsible for steering the development of major project components in the initial phase, including:

Nominations due by Tuesday, October 13, 2020 6:00 pm ET

- Providing guidance on an environmental scan of the use of functional, clinical, and social risk factors in measurement, and the availability and scientific acceptability of any standardized risk adjustment frameworks. In particular, NQF will leverage the experience and expertise of TEP members to identify and assess the current state of datasets used for risk adjustment, functional, clinical, or social risk factors available for testing, approaches to conceptual and statistical methods, and approaches to interpretation and decisions to include or not include functional and/or social risk factors.
- Directing the development of a technical guidance report for measure developers on the process of developing a risk adjustment models that consider functional and social risk factors for outcome and resource use measures, and the appropriateness of a standard risk adjustment framework. Based on the TEP's consensus, NQF will develop a step-by-step approach to developing a risk adjustment model that considers functional and social risk that is aligned with NQF measure evaluation criteria. Diverse perspectives on the TEP will help to ensure that NQF prepares a final product that is valuable to a broad range of stakeholders, especially measure developers but also researchers, payers, and program implementers.

The second phase of the project, pending availability of funding, will focus on updates to the environmental scan and technical guidance report based on input from NQF members, members of the public, and targeted input from measure developers through key informant interviews. The TEP will provide guidance on updates to the technical guidance report based on input received.

Technical Expert Panel Structure

NQF seeks to convene a multistakeholder TEP of no more than 15 individuals to complete the goals of this project. Additionally, NQF will also seek to identify up to 10 Federal Liaisons across CMS, ASPE, and AHRQ, among others.

Terms

TEP members will serve for a term of up to 24 months.

Participation on the Committee requires a significant time commitment.

TEP members are expected to participate in all scheduled web meetings. Over the course of the TEP member's term, meetings may be rescheduled; new dates are set based on the availability of the majority of the TEP.

Committee participation includes:

- Participating in up to five, two-hour web meetings in the first 12-month period and up to six, two-hour web meetings in the second 12-month period;
- Guiding the development of an environmental scan assessing the current landscape of social and/or functional risk adjustment, and the availability and scientific acceptability of any standard risk adjustment frameworks;
- Guiding the development of technical guidance for measure developers on the development of risk adjustment models that consider functional, clinical, and/or social risk factors for outcome and resource use measures, and the appropriateness of a standard risk adjustment frameworks;
- Reviewing input from NQF members, members of the public, and targeted input from measure developers through key informant interviews and guiding updates to the technical guidance;

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- Reviewing and providing feedback on four written deliverables (environmental scan report, technical guidance report, and updated versions of the two reports); and
- Providing additional feedback and input as needed

Tentative Meeting Date for Orientation

Selected individuals will learn more about future meeting dates, deliverables, and responsibilities at the TEP orientation meeting.

Meeting	Date/Time
Web Meeting 1 – Orientation	December 15, 2020

Preferred Expertise and Composition

TEP members are selected to ensure representation from a variety of stakeholders, including consumers, purchasers, providers, professionals, health plans, suppliers, community and public health, and healthcare quality experts. Because NQF attempts to represent a diversity of stakeholder perspectives on committees, only a limited number of individuals from each of these stakeholder groups can be seated onto a committee.

In addition, NQF is seeking individuals with domain knowledge and expertise. NQF is interested in the following expertise for this project:

- Patients, consumers, caregivers with background, interest, or training in statistics, or interest in social or functional risk adjustment are of particular interest;
- Clinicians with advanced training in statistics, biostatistics, economics, psychometrics, econometrics, or health services research;
- Measure developers experienced in outcome or resource use measure development and the NQF endorsement and maintenance process;
- Statisticians and methodologists specializing in risk adjustment methodology for patient experience, outcome, or cost/resource use measures used in Medicare programs or quality measures used for payment in a state healthcare program.
- Experts in functional risk data sets and surveys, risk factors, and the overlap of functional risk and social risk.
- Researchers with experience using alternatives to Federal data sources – for example, data from the Social Security Administration or Veterans Affairs data.

Please review the NQF conflict of interest policy to learn about how NQF identifies potential conflict of interest. All potential TEP members must disclose any current and past activities prior to and during the nomination process in order to be considered.

Consideration and Substitution

Please note that nominations are to an individual, not an organization, so “substitutions” of other individuals are *not permitted*. Committee members are encouraged to engage with their colleagues and solicit their input throughout the process.

Nominations due by Tuesday, October 13, 2020 6:00 pm ET

Application Requirements

Nominations are sought for individuals. Self-nominations are welcome. Third-party nominations must indicate that the individual has been contacted and is willing to serve.

To nominate an individual to the project committee, please **submit** the following information:

- A completed [online nomination form](#), including:
 - A brief statement of interest
 - A brief description of nominee expertise highlighting experience relevant to the TEP
 - A short biography (maximum 100 words), highlighting experience/knowledge relevant to the expertise described above
 - Curriculum vitae or list of relevant experience (e.g., publications) *up to 20 pages*
- A completed disclosure of interest form. This will be requested upon your submission of the nomination form.
- Confirmation of availability to participate in currently scheduled calls and meeting dates.

Deadline for Submission

All nominations **MUST** be submitted by **6:00 pm ET on October 13, 2020**. The proposed roster will be posted for public comment from November 9 – 23, 2020. The final TEP roster will be posted on December 9, 2020.

Questions

If you have any questions, please contact Hannah Ingber at 202-783-1300 or RAguidance@qualityforum.org. Thank you for your interest.