



National Qualification System User Guide

Purpose:

In the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) FEMA was tasked with implementing 6 USC 320 “Credentialing and Typing” in response they developed the National Qualification System (NQS).

The NQS provides the tools for jurisdictions and organizations to implement their own qualification and certification processes to share resources more seamlessly with other jurisdictions and organizations. The NQS was also developed to track and maintain qualified and credentialed personnel for disaster response. The use of the NQS will ensure WVEMD maintains a fully functional and qualified Incident Command staff within the State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC). NQS also supports the National Preparedness Goal by creating a network of qualified personnel for potential nationwide deployment.” National Integration Center (NIC).

Implementation:

WV EMD is implementing the NQS utilizing the following steps:

Step 1: Identification of the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). The AHJ having jurisdiction for Emergency Management in West Virginia is the Director of the WVEMD. The role of the AHJ is to create and administer a process to qualify, certify and credential incident personnel. The AHJ has the authority (6 U.S.C. § 320 and HSPD-5) to designate a program manager to oversee the implementation of this program.

Step 2: Establish a Qualification Review Board (QRB). The program manager will collaborate with various Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to develop the criteria and standards to be used to select individuals that will be appointed to the QRB, this is the cornerstone of the program’s success.

Step 3: Identify Evaluators and Mentors. Once a QRB has been established the development of the criteria, documentation, and process of review can be put into place to facilitate the designation of evaluators and mentors. These individuals will be the only persons authorized to certify that steps identified in the Position Task Books (PTB) have been completed according to established standards.

Step 4: Assign Personnel to Incident Response Positions. Once Evaluators and mentors are certified by the QRB, individual staff members can be assigned to specific positions and will be given assigned a Position Task Book (PTB) to document compliance progress.

Step 5: Conduct and Track Progress. All training and PTB completions will be tracked by the Preparedness Section in the One Responder Portal (a program specifically developed by the NIC for this purpose). Upon completion, the QRB will review, and the Certifying Official (CO) would sign approved PTBs.

Definitions:

Certifying Official: The AHJ for the state’s Emergency Management Program is the Director of the Emergency Management Division as previously identified. Under this authority the Director has designated the Preparedness and Response Section Chief as the NQS Certifying Official (CO). The CO is responsible for administering the program to include but not limited to, Certifying, Qualifying, and

Credentialing all program participants. The CO is also responsible to Decertify, adjudicate Appeal request, and to facilitate all other program business.

Qualification: NQS qualification is the process of; Enabling personnel to perform the duties of specific incident positions; documenting that individuals have demonstrated the capabilities required for those positions; providing the means to meet any other prerequisites established for the position; the performance of the duties of a particular position is measured through a combination of training, on-the-job coaching, and experience; and the establishment of the minimum qualification criteria for a specific position.

Certification: is the official documentation indicating that an individual is qualified to perform in a specified NIMS position.

Credentialing is the verification of an individual's identity and qualifications to fulfill a specific incident-related position. Credentials may also document other attributes of individuals, such as affiliations and/or privileges. In the NQS you can only be credentialed by the Authority Having Jurisdiction's (AHJ).

The Qualification Review Board is the panel that evaluates all the evidence that a trainee can fulfill the position. It can only be authorized by the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). The QRB evidence (package) requirements are described in the Qualification Review Board NQS guidance. The QRB evaluation results in a recommendation to the Certifying Official (CO) to certify or to not certify the trainee as credentialed for a specific position.

Mentors and Evaluators are individuals designated by the CO and given the authority to sign individual line items in the position task books certifying that the member has appropriately demonstrated the ability to complete the assigned task. These individuals can be NQS qualified and/or Subject Matter Experts, etc. All Evaluators and Mentors must be approved by the Certifying Official and entered into the One Responder System.

Program Benefits:

1. NQS provides the tools for jurisdictions and organizations to implement their own qualification and certification processes to share resources more seamlessly with other jurisdictions and organizations
2. NQS enhances mutual aid by speaking with one voice
3. Entities can rapidly identify personnel who have the qualifications for the job
4. Supplement their team with confidence knowing that the mutual aid they receive consists of the capabilities for which they asked
5. Efficiently define staffing requirements
6. Clarify recruitment and training requirements
7. NQS also supports the National Preparedness Goal by creating a network of qualified personnel for potential nationwide deployment

Job Titles/Position Qualifications Overview describes the education, experience, training, and other qualifications for a specific position. These documents consist of the following sections:

1. **Description:** A description of the primary functions of the position
2. **Education:** The minimum education required for the position

3. **Training:** The minimum training required for the position
4. **Experience:** The minimum experience required for the position
5. **Physical/Medical Fitness:** The necessary level of physical/medical fitness for the position
6. **Currency:** The minimum currency requirements to maintain the position
7. **Technical Licenses and Certification:** Any licenses or certifications necessary for the position

Position Task Books (PTBs) identify the competencies, behaviors, and tasks that personnel must demonstrate.

1. Various organizations use PTBs to demonstrate competencies
2. PTBs provide an observable, measurable, and standardized method of documenting the trainee's performance in a position
3. Authorities Having Jurisdiction may add discipline- or hazard-specific tasks to NIMS PTBs

Qualification guidelines:

State/Local Guidelines for issuing and Completing PTB's. Supervisors will determine which position task book should be issued to individuals based on needs of the agency and/or assigned position within the agency.

1. Issuing PTB's also includes supervisor notifying EMD NQS Program Manager for entry into PTB Tracking System
2. Supervisor will also determine which training courses trainee will need to complete and ensure training is assigned
3. Assigned training will be reported to the Training Officer for entry into training Tracking System
4. Person should also receive information on qualified evaluators and SME's that can mentor trainee and are authorized to sign line items upon demonstrating proficiency
5. Section Chief are required to determine who is authorized as SME's and Evaluators and provide a list of names to the Training Officer for entry into the Evaluator /SME Tracking System
6. Supervisor should recommend which line items trainee should challenge for immediate signature
7. Trainee should be provided with opportunities to demonstrate task and receive credit
8. Supervisor are required to send quarterly progress reports to the Training Officer for entry into the NQS Tracking System
9. If QRB does not recommend certification package will be sent back to supervisor with reason for rejection who will inform trainee
10. Trainee will correct deficiencies at this time or appeal the board's decision
11. Application and instructions for appeal can be found in program guidance
12. Only the Authority Having Jurisdiction can issue position specific state-wide credentials that certifies individuals in the National Qualification System

The following reference documents were used to develop WV EMD's state and local NQS Program.

1. Preparedness Grants Manual 207-22-0001 Version 4, 2023, Program Appendix H: Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Program Priorities
2. National Qualification System Implementation Objectives
3. NQS Implementation Plan
4. NIMS Guideline for NQS
5. NIMS NQS Supplemental Guide for Qualification Review Boards
6. NIMS NQS Supplemental Guide for Coaches and Evaluators

NQS Support Documents:

NQS Implementation Phase:
WV EMD NQS Implementation Plan
PTB Checklist
Position Qualification Application
Qualification Review Board
Evaluator Designation Letter
NQS Certification Letter
QRB Member Letterhead
QRB Self Evaluation
Decertification Letter
Recognition of Prior Learning
Appeal Request
Position Task Books
EOC Skillsets

All FEMA NQS guidance including all available Position Task Books can be accessed at:

<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims/components>