Guidance on Selecting a Local Practitioner

Six to nine months prior to your AAQEP site visit is the time to nominate a local practitioner to serve on your Initial Quality Review Team (Initial QRT). This individual, who will serve as a full member of the AAQEP review team, will also bring valuable knowledge regarding your local schools and state environment to help the rest of the team understand your program features in context.

Qualifications and Considerations

Your nominee for this position should be a current or recently retired local P-12 educator with experience in a role appropriate to the program(s) seeking accreditation (e.g., as a teacher, administrator, counselor, etc.). You’ll want to select someone who has:

- A solid, first-hand understanding of the local schools and state education context
- Sufficient time to serve as a full member of the AAQEP team, including time for training (see time estimates under Local Practitioner Commitments below)
- Some knowledge of your program, without being so closely connected as to present a conflict of interest (e.g., someone formally connected to your program as a cooperating teacher, supervisor, or adjunct may be appropriate as long as their employment with your program is limited to no more than one course per semester)

In addition, providers that have gone through an AAQEP quality assurance review recommend selecting a local practitioner who:

- Is familiar with the program’s context, mission, organization, and terminology well enough to “translate” and answer questions for the other reviewers
- Has a mindset compatible with the AAQEP philosophy (i.e., asset-based, collegial, and context-aware with a focus on improvement and innovation)
- Understands continuous improvement
- Appreciates the value and purpose of various forms of data (quantitative and qualitative)
- Will follow through and complete the online professional learning modules
- Can set aside their own personal bias (positive or otherwise) about the program during the review process

Please avoid selecting:

- A full-time faculty member or administrator from your institution/organization, including anyone recently retired from these roles. Such individuals are often too close to the
program itself to approach the review process objectively. It is critical to the review process that all stakeholders are confident in the confidentiality of interviews, and the appearance of a well-known person connected to the program, such as a current or former instructor, is likely to undermine that confidence.

- A full-time faculty member or administrator from another institution of higher education, including anyone recently retired from these roles. Such individuals are unlikely to have the strong P-12 perspective that is needed for the local practitioner because of where their main work is situated.

Finally, you may need to consider your own ability to support the local practitioner’s participation in the AAQEP review by:

- Securing release days—approximately 2 full days for the virtual site visit—and even funding a stipend or substitute to enable the local practitioner to fully participate in the team’s work (if selecting a P-12 partner to serve in this capacity, approach school administration first to secure agreement on release dates)
- Offering a letter or other documentation that recognizes the practitioner’s service for his/her professional file

Local Practitioner Commitments

To enable your prospective local practitioner to make a well-informed decision about accepting this commitment, please share the following expectations with your nominee and discuss what supports you can offer.

A local practitioner is an essential and fully participating member of an AAQEP Initial Quality Review Team (QRT). The team lead will support the local practitioner in the role, starting by making contact prior to their first assignment to help address any questions or concerns.

The local practitioner commits to performing the following activities (estimated time requirements are listed in parentheses):

1. Complete AAQEP Professional Learning Modules 1 and 3 (online training) before beginning service on the team (3-5 hours)
2. Prepare for the previsit review meetings—read the provider’s Initial Accreditation Report and document notes for discussion (8-10 hours)
3. Participate in the team welcome meeting and previsit review meetings (4-6 hours)
4. Attend full virtual site visit (generally 2 days)
5. Complete reporting (3-5 hours)

Depending on the local practitioner’s level of familiarity with the goals of an accreditation review, it may be helpful to remind the practitioner that one of the key aims of this process is to help programs identify opportunities for growth and improvement. As such, the clarification and interview questions teams ask should not be viewed as criticisms, but as a welcome part of the review process.
Serving as an AAQEP reviewer represents a considerable time commitment, but local practitioners say it is a meaningful service experience, citing the deeper understanding they gained of the educator preparation process and new avenues of collaboration that opened as a result.

**Commonly Asked Questions About Local Practitioners**

**Can the local practitioner be a program graduate?**
Yes, but this is not a requirement.

**Can we provide the local practitioner with a stipend?**
While providers sometimes offer the local practitioner a small honorarium as a token of appreciation, the local practitioner’s role is not a paid position. AAQEP reviewers volunteer their time as a way of giving back to the profession and in return for a unique professional development experience. For practicing teachers, providers often reimburse districts for the cost of hiring a substitute teacher (though some districts do not require this, viewing participation in the review team as valuable professional development for the local practitioner).

**What if the local practitioner is currently teaching a course as an adjunct or serving as a candidate supervisor?**
Local practitioners who are working with program candidates at the time of the virtual site visit (e.g., as an adjunct instructor or supervising interns) will limit their participation during interviews with these stakeholder groups.

**How many local practitioners do I need?**
You will only need one local practitioner unless you have written more than one Initial Accreditation Report (IAR); each IAR will have its own Initial Quality Review Team with its own local practitioner. If you’ll need multiple teams, please select one local practitioner for each team, with experiences and qualifications related to the particular programs under review.

**How much time should the local practitioner be prepared to commit for this role?**
The role entails online training, reading, and documentation that can be completed at a time of the practitioner’s choosing (generally 11-15 hours overall). In addition, the practitioner participates in a sequence of previsit review meetings and 2 days of virtual site visit review activities. See time estimates under Local Practitioner Commitments below.

**What happens if my local practitioner can’t complete the assigned work?**
Sometimes after agreeing to serve on a team, a local practitioner may encounter an unforeseen situation that prevents them from continuing on the team. It is always helpful for providers to keep a backup list with a few potential names in case of such circumstances.

**Next Steps**

**At least 6 months prior** to your site visit, complete the [Local Practitioner Nomination Form](#) to send AAQEP your nominee’s name and other pertinent details. Contact the Director of Accreditation Services at s.hiller@aaqep.org with any questions.