



# OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

## Oregon State Qualification System Guidance Document Engagement Session Feedback

### Program Background

The Oregon State Qualification System Guidance provides the policies and procedures to ensure the state builds and maintains a workforce of qualified, certified, and credentialed personnel to serve in National Incident Management System and Incident Command System positions or Emergency Operations Center roles.

This guidance sets standards for any authority having jurisdiction, including all levels of government and organizations, private sector entities, and nongovernmental organizations with incident management or support responsibilities. It describes the basic principles of standard qualification, certification and credentialing processes. Oregon's qualification, certification, and credentialing process shall be consistent with the most recently published NIMS Guideline for the National Qualification System.

An essential component of structuring the State Qualification System involves gathering feedback and gaining local perspectives to inform program content and design strategies. ODEM held a 30-day open comment period from Jan. 24 to Feb. 23 and an [engagement session](#) on Feb. 27 with key state and local partners, in which participants reviewed the guidance, asked questions and voiced concerns about the methodology outlined in the guidance. Participants provided local experiences, expanded on current and future needs, and identified challenges to consider when developing and implementing the program materials.

### Emerging Themes

Several key themes emerged from the engagement session for ODEM to consider when designing and implementing the State Qualification System, including:

- Clarification and revision of *Appendix B: Interim Guidance for EOC Skillset Coach/Evaluators and Final Evaluators*. Particularly, the need for a baseline qualification requirement for Emergency Operation Center skillset evaluators, even in the interim. Additionally, clarification on the ability to delegate authority and rules around delegation.
- Concerns expressed over the burden the historical qualification board process puts on individuals who have years of experience and should be qualified at face value by their position.

- Concerns regarding the feasibility of jurisdictions having the bandwidth to follow this guidance, especially cities that are not funded through the Emergency Management Performance Grant.
- Concerns about the make-up of Qualification Review Boards and the Appeals Subcommittee.
- Concerns about jurisdictions not prioritizing and taking advantage of the 24-month historical recognition period until requirements change to apply to all jurisdictions.

## What We Heard

*“This document was very detailed, overwhelming, and at points hard to understand or confusing, especially in the first half. The ordering of content was odd or confusing at points. Simplification and reconsideration of the order of content would make this easier to consume.”*

*“I appreciate you approaching this rollout in a way that keeps it feasible for local jurisdictions to follow.”*

*“Staffing a separate QRB for each region in the state is a tall ask, especially for rural counties. It is probably better to have a single QRB with multiple representatives or delegates from each area.”*

*“In Appendix B it indicates that agency heads are granted temporary authority to act as coaches, evaluators, and final evaluators for the 24 months after guidance is published. I have major concerns about this. There is zero qualification requirement for them to act in this capacity and unfortunately in some jurisdictions, the agency head is not qualified in these skillsets whatsoever.”*

*“My understanding has been that agencies that have systems in place wouldn’t need to adopt SQS, but I see verbiage in here that says we can use established qualification standards in conjunction with SQS – this needs clarification.”*

## The Path Forward

Stakeholder feedback indicated many areas could use restructuring and clarification. ODEM has taken the information and feedback provided through the engagement session and continued conversations with stakeholders and the public and has since made several adaptations to the State Qualification System. Modifications include:

- Development of flowcharts to visually represent the processes outlined in documents.
- Some restructuring of parts of the guidance including clarifying Appendix B.
- Further definition and development of the Governance Committee, Qualification Review Boards, and Appeals Subcommittee.
- Hosting a Q&A session at the 2024 Oregon Prepared Workshop where many EMPG recipients will be in attendance.

Some feedback may not be immediately implemented but will be considered for the program in the future. This includes most other concerns brought up that will only be figured out with time. This guidance is a living document that will be updated as needed, as we work to build a greater standard of qualification, certification and credentialing in the state.

ODEM appreciates the opportunity to engage with its partners on this program and will continue to prioritize feedback from stakeholders to ensure the Oregon State Qualification System reflects and serves Oregonians.