

# Spark Self-Assessment

## Domain: Administration and Business Practices

The Spark Self-Assessment is a reflective tool designed to help you evaluate your program, identify areas for growth, and set improvement goals. The Domains, Standards and Indicators are identical to the Spark portfolio.

While it can support progress toward completing your portfolio, it is not required to use this tool. It can also serve as a valuable guide for setting goals for a Quality Improvement Cycle.

As you review the standards and indicators at each star level, use the 7-point rating scale to assess how well your program implements the practice.

- **Circle 7** if the practice is already a strong and consistent part of your program.
- **Circle 1** if the practice is not currently in place.
- **Use your best judgment** to determine where your program falls on the scale.

Evaluate your program at each star level, even if you don't plan to complete a portfolio for every level. You will decide which star levels to submit and which goals to focus on.

If you rate any standard at any star level **4 or lower**, you can choose it as a **Quality Improvement (QI) Cycle** goal to strengthen your program and make progress on completing your Spark portfolio.

<b>Domain: Administration and Business Practices (AB)</b>			
<b>Standard AB1: The program follows sound business practices, policies, and procedures that support financial sustainability.</b>			
<b>Why is this important?</b>	Following sound business practices, policies, and procedures is essential for ensuring the financial sustainability of a child care program. Maintaining accurate business and tax records helps the program stay organized, comply with legal requirements, and avoid financial discrepancies or penalties. Engaging in activities like business planning and budgeting allows the program to plan for future growth, anticipate expenses, and use resources effectively. It is also important to charge rates that cover expenses and costs, and to implement strategies for ensuring full fee collection and enrollment. These practices are crucial to keeping the program financially stable and operating smoothly. By avoiding financial mismanagement, unexpected deficits, and legal issues, the program can continue to provide high-quality care, focus on meeting the needs of children and families, and stay in business long-term.		
<b>Star Level</b>	<b>Indicators of Meeting the Standard</b>	<b>This is already a strong practice</b>	<b>There is room for improvement</b>
<b>3</b>	The program maintains business records that include income, expenses and tax records.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	
<b>Meets 4-, &amp; 5-star levels</b>	The program's business practices include planning activities such as business projections, a business plan, a budget, etc	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	

**Standard AB2: The program assures a professional working climate.**

(This standard applies to programs with multiple (2+) employees, not counting a provider, substitutes or immediate family members. It does include 2 or more full- or part-time employees. Skip if does not apply)

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Having a professional working climate is vital for supporting staff well-being, ensuring smooth program operations, and maintaining a high standard of care. Policies that outline clear expectations help staff perform their duties effectively and with consistency, reducing misunderstandings and promoting a collaborative work environment. Professional ethics and grievance procedures ensure that staff feel respected, valued, and have a mechanism to address concerns. Providing space away from children is also essential, as it allows staff to recharge, focus on their work, and handle necessary tasks without distraction. This kind of supportive environment helps prevent burnout, increases job satisfaction, and ensures that staff can offer the best care and guidance to children, ultimately benefiting the entire program.</p>		
<p><b>Star Level</b></p>	<p><b>Indicators of Meeting the Standard</b></p>	<p><b>This is already a strong practice</b></p>	<p><b>There is room for improvement</b></p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p>The program has written personnel policies addressing scheduling, preparation and planning time, meals and breaks, procedures for program planning and establishing routines, guidance and discipline, professional ethics, grievance procedures, and written job descriptions for each employee</p>	<p>7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1</p>	
<p><b>Meets 4-, &amp; 5-star levels</b></p>	<p>Space away from children is provided for planning, administrative activities, relaxation, and personal care.</p>	<p>7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1</p>	

**Standard AB3: Personnel are evaluated on their performance, including adherence to program procedures, adult-child interactions, interactions with families, interactions with staff and other professionals, professionalism, and adherence to ethical standards.**

(This standard applies to programs with multiple (2+) employees, not counting a provider, substitutes or immediate family members. It does include 2 or more full- or part-time employees. Skip if does not apply)

Why is this important?	Regular performance evaluations are essential in early childhood settings to ensure that personnel provide high-quality care and maintain professional standards. Evaluations help staff understand their strengths and areas for growth, promoting continuous improvement and accountability. Assessing adherence to program procedures ensures consistency and safety, while evaluating adult-child interactions ensures that children receive nurturing, responsive care that supports their development. Interactions with families, staff, and other professionals impact the overall program environment and collaboration, making them key areas of focus. Professionalism and ethical conduct are particularly important in early childhood settings, where trust, confidentiality, and respect are crucial in building strong relationships with children and families. Including self-assessments in evaluations allows staff to reflect on their own practices and identify personal goals for growth. Additionally, incorporating observations of adult-child interactions provides valuable insight into how staff engage with children, ensuring that best practices are followed and continuously improved.		
Star Level	Indicators of Meeting the Standard	This is already a strong practice	There is room for improvement
3	Employees are evaluated using a personnel performance rating tool.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	
4	Employees evaluations include a self-assessment.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	
5	Employees evaluations include observations of adult-child interactions.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	

**Standard AB4: The program promotes positive working relationships and professionalism.**

(This standard applies to programs with multiple (2+) employees, not counting a provider, substitutes or immediate family members. It does include 2 or more full- or part-time employees. Skip if does not apply)

Why is this important?	Promoting positive working relationships and professionalism is essential for creating a supportive and effective team. Regularly scheduled staff meetings with team-building activities strengthen communication, trust, and collaboration among staff, leading to a more cohesive and motivated team. Activities that build morale help prevent burnout, increase job satisfaction, and create a positive work environment, which ultimately benefits the children in care. Encouraging staff to participate in professional organizations or advocacy groups enhances their knowledge, keeps them informed about best practices, and fosters a sense of professional pride. These efforts contribute to staff retention, improved program quality, and a strong, engaged workforce committed to providing the best possible care and education for children.		
Star Level	Indicators of Meeting the Standard	This is already a strong practice	There is room for improvement
3	Staff meetings are scheduled regularly and include team-building activities.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	
4	Activities are scheduled regularly to build and maintain morale and cohesiveness. Activities may include peer-to-peer collaboration, teaching teams, support by colleagues, and mentoring.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	
5	Participation by program personnel in professional organizations/advocacy groups.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	

**Standard AB5: A comprehensive program evaluation process is developed and performed on an annual basis. The evaluation examines the program’s policies and procedures, care and education environment, curriculum, and administration and business practices.**

**Evaluation sources include:**

- 1. family input/Spark Family Survey**
- 2. program personnel feedback/input (or provider self-evaluation)**
- 3. rating scales or evaluation instrument**
- 4. child outcome data from assessments**
- 5. outside evaluators**

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Conducting a comprehensive program evaluation on an annual basis is essential for maintaining and improving practices and policies that support children and families. Evaluating policies, procedures, the care and education environment, curriculum, and business practices helps identify strengths and areas for growth, ensuring the program continues to meet the needs of children, families, and staff. Regular evaluations support continuous improvement, enhance program effectiveness, and ensure compliance with regulations and best practices. Without a structured evaluation process, issues may go unnoticed, leading to inefficiencies, outdated policies, lower quality care, and decreased satisfaction among families and staff. A well-executed evaluation strengthens the program’s reputation, supports informed decision-making, and ultimately leads to better outcomes for children and families.</p>		
<p><b>Star Level</b></p>	<p><b>Indicators of Meeting the Standard</b></p>	<p><b>This is already a strong practice</b></p>	<p><b>There is room for improvement</b></p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p>Sources for the program evaluation include information from 3 of the 5 sources listed.</p>	<p>7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1</p>	
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p>Sources for the program evaluation include information from 4 of the 5 sources listed.</p>	<p>7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1</p>	
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p>Sources for the program evaluation include information from 5 of the 5 sources listed.</p>	<p>7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1</p>	

**Standard AB6: In programs where there are multiple employees, the following benefits are offered to encourage retention:**

- 1. health insurance (medical, dental, vision, or supplemental)**
- 2. retirement option**
- 3. free or discounted child care**
- 4. paid time off (vacation, sick, personal)**
- 5. financial supports for training and/or education**
- 6. paid membership to a professional organization (NAEYC/OAEYC/NAFCC)**

(This standard applies to programs with multiple (2+) employees, not counting a provider, substitutes or immediate family members. It does include 2 or more full- or part-time employees. Skip if does not apply)

Why is this important?	Offering these benefits helps improve staff retention by enhancing job satisfaction, financial stability, and professional growth. Health insurance ensures employees and their families can access essential medical care, while a retirement option supports long-term financial security. Free or discounted child care reduces a major expense for staff with young children, making employment more sustainable. Paid time off prevents burnout and supports work-life balance. Financial support for training and education encourages skill development and career advancement, benefiting both employees and program quality. Finally, paid memberships to professional organizations provide networking, resources, and advocacy opportunities, reinforcing commitment to the field.		
<b>Star Level</b>	<b>Indicators of Meeting the Standard</b>	<b>This is already a strong practice</b>	<b>There is room for improvement</b>
<b>3</b>	Program offers one of the benefits listed above.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	
<b>4</b>	Program offers two of the benefits listed above.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	
<b>5</b>	Program offers three of the benefits listed above.	7-----6-----5-----4-----3-----2-----1	

## Goal Documentation

If you rated any standards as **4 or below** and wish to set a goal for that standard, please check the corresponding box in the table below. You can select multiple goals from the same standard or choose goals from different standards. Next, provide a brief description of the goal(s) you plan to work on for each standard. You don't need to have all the details yet, as you will have the chance to elaborate further when documenting your goals for the Quality Improvement (QI) Cycle.

### Example:

Check the box if choosing a goal in the standard	Standards
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LD2: The program uses a curriculum that supports all children's learning and development.
What goal/s would you like to work on?	<i>I would like to find a curriculum that meets the needs of the 3-year olds that are in my program. I would also like to take training on how to use it.</i>

Check the box if choosing a goal in the standard	Standards
<input type="checkbox"/>	AB1: The program follows sound business practices, policies, and procedures that support financial sustainability.
What goal/s would you like to work on?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	AB2: The program assures a professional working climate.
What goal/s would you like to work on?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	AB3: Personnel are evaluated on their performance, including adherence to program procedures, adult-child interactions, interactions with families, interactions with staff and other professionals, professionalism, and adherence to ethical standards.
What goal/s would you like to work on?	



Check the box if choosing a goal in the standard	<b>Standards</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	AB4: The program promotes positive working relationships and professionalism
What goal/s would you like to work on?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	AB5: A comprehensive program evaluation process is developed and performed on an annual basis.
What goal/s would you like to work on?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	AB6: In programs where there are multiple employees, benefits are offered to encourage retention.
What goal/s would you like to work on?	

**Next Steps:**

If you choose to use any of these goal/s for a **Spark Quality Improvement (QI) Cycle**, you can record them on the **QI Cycle Documentation Form**. This is an on-line form that is emailed to programs after they complete a **Spark Participation Application** and indicate they wish to do a **QI Cycle**. The link to the **Spark Participation Application** can be found at [oregonspark.org](http://oregonspark.org).

In the **QI Cycle Documentation Form**, you'll find resources to support you in identifying and achieving your goals and a space to outline the steps you'll take to reach them. After 12 months, you will complete a **QI Cycle Reflection Form** to report on your progress and/or achievement of your goals. At that point, you can begin a new **QI Cycle** with additional goals.