

I. Remote Service Provider Requirements

Any organization interested in managing Remote Mentoring and/or Desktop Quality Assurance (DTQA) must become a Home Energy Score Service Provider before offering these services. If your organization, after examining these requirements and guidelines, is interested in applying to become a Home Energy Score Service Provider, please download the [Home Energy Score Remote Service Provider Implementation Plan](#). Service Providers must be able to demonstrate that they meet the following criteria:

1. In business providing quality assurance administrative services for 5 years or more.
2. Proven ability to meet basic information technology requirements, as follows:
 - a. Must have an information system to track, monitor, and store the data files from remote mentoring and DTQA sessions.
 - b. Must provide access for the Home Energy Score Team (HEST) to data from sessions when requested, including but not limited to photos/videos from QA and remote mentoring.
 - c. Must be able to ensure data protection and IT security, including but not limited to data encryption, password aging, transaction logging, security breach policies, disaster planning, and backup protocols.
 - d. Must be able to maintain all Home Energy Score API integration needs and future changes as necessary.
 - e. Must be able to provide reports to the HEST of Scores and DTQA data entry, and provide monthly reports on QA trending and score analysis.
3. Proven ability to fulfill the DTQA and/or Remote Mentoring process requirements – see the **HEScore Mentoring and QA Guidelines** document.
4. Proven training, mentoring, and credentialing ability, such that Remote Mentors and DTQA Auditors can consistently comply with protocols in the **HEScore Mentoring and QA Guidelines** document.
5. Must participate in regular Home Energy Score meetings, webinars, and conferences as directed by HEST.

The Home Energy Score Team (HEST) reserves the right to assess and deny any organization's ability to meet these requirements or to suspend or terminate organization for non-compliance. Home Energy Score Partners that do not meet requirements for implementing quality assurance either directly or through a contract with a Quality Assurance Service Provider must direct candidate Assessors to one or more qualifying Service Providers. Before being given access to the Home Energy Scoring Tool, Assessors under these Partners must select a qualifying Service Provider to perform QA and notify HEST of this selection.

II. Dispute Resolution and Appeals Guidelines

Any organization interested in offering Remote Mentoring and/or DTQA, as well as any Partner working with an organization that offers these services, should consider the below scenarios and include guidance in their contract agreements for how to manage these and other potential disputes.

- **Remote Mentoring - Insufficient information provided by the mentee to the Remote Mentor (RM)**

In some instances, the Mentor may find that the mentee did not follow the protocols in the **HEScore Mentoring and QA Guidelines** and did not provide sufficient information for the RM to sign off on the Assessor's performance. This could include poorly-connected, choppy, blurry video, or any other condition that does not allow the Mentor to effectively provide guidance and support to the mentee. It is advisable that the mentee and RM agree (either through contract or other means) on how fees will be addressed in situations where follow-up mentoring sessions are required due to the mentee providing insufficient information, as per the protocols. The mentee cannot become active Assessor until they have written approval from an approved Home Energy Score Remote Mentor.

- **DTQA - Insufficient information provided by the Assessor to the DTQA Auditor**

In some instances, the DTQA Auditor may find that the Assessor did not follow the protocols in the **HEScore Mentoring and QA Guidelines** and did not provide sufficient information to complete the DTQA review. This could include sloppy, blurry, or otherwise insufficient photographs; sloppy, poorly drafted, or otherwise illegible floorplan sketches, or any other condition that does not allow the DTQA Auditor to effectively provide quality assurance. Whenever an assessment is deemed as having insufficient information to conduct DTQA, the DTQA Auditor can retrieve another randomly selected photo packet from the same Assessor to meet the 5% QA minimum standards.

The DTQA Auditor must have a system wherein they can denote an assessment as having insufficient information to conduct DTQA. This denotation can then be viewed by Assessor ID to determine if this is a repeated problem with a specific individual Assessor. Whenever an Assessor is deemed to have provided insufficient information, they should be contacted by the DTQA Auditor (either email or phone call) explaining which areas were insufficient and why. Should a single Assessor be found to have provided insufficient information to conduct DTQA five or more times and have been contacted by the DTQA Auditor on at least two separate occasions regarding this, then the DTQA Auditor should notify the Partner overseeing that Assessor as well as the HEST. At that point, the Partner must deactivate the Assessor, or can appeal on the Assessor's behalf first to the Remote Service Provider, then to the HEST (see below).

It is advisable that the contract between the Assessor (or the Assessor's Partner organization, if appropriate) and the Service Provider (1) outline how the Assessor will be notified in cases where information is found to be insufficient to conduct DTQA; (2) state that the Assessor can be deactivated if they are found to have five or more assessments with insufficient information; and (3) include

information regarding how to appeal any deactivation. It is also advisable that the contract include requisite Protocols for both the Assessor and the DTQA Auditor to avoid misunderstanding.

- **DTQA - Initiation of a re-score based on the DTQA assessment**

It is possible that, if an Assessor has not adequately scored a home according to Home Energy Score guidance and procedures, the resultant Home Energy Score issued to the customer must be corrected. If this is a point-of-sale transaction, then the Service Provider should have systems in place to ensure the DTQA assessment is completed in a timely manner prior to close of sale. This could include entry of invalid or nonsensical data values, entry of incorrect data values as determined through photographic evidence of differing conditions, entry of seemingly incorrect data values as determined through unclear or questionable photographic evidence, or any other condition by which the DTQA Auditor determines the resultant Score was likely incorrect by two or more points on the Home Energy Score scale. The DTQA Auditor is given full right of determination over whether the information provided by the Assessor is likely accurate or inaccurate when compared with photo evidence and web-provided resources.

It is advisable that the contract between the Assessor and Service Provider (or the Assessor's Partner organization, if appropriate) state how costs will be addressed in situations where follow-up visits to the home are required due to the Assessor providing an invalid Home Energy Score. This can be handled through the Assessor covering the costs associated with re-visiting the home, the Service Provider reimbursing the Assessor for costs incurred, some combination of these solutions, or another solution by which costs are covered. This should be outlined in the contract to include situations both where the Assessor's initial assessment was correct, and where the initial assessment needed to be corrected.

Regular communication between the DTQA Auditor and Assessors can help maintain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship. In the unlikely event that a "rescoring" dispute is not resolvable based on the contract, the Remote Service Provider should notify the Partner overseeing the Assessor and the HEST to address the issue of that particular home's rescoring needs.

If an Assessor consistently scores homes incorrectly and fails to improve after corrective guidance, the HEST reserves the right to recommend retraining and/or deactivation of the Assessor.

- **DTQA - Initiation of QA and/or rescore via customer complaint**

To address instances whereby a customer questions the validity of their Home Energy Score, the Partner (either independently or through their Service Provider) must have in place a standard documented procedure for addressing such concerns and requests. It is recommended that the Service Provider maintain all QA information collected by Assessors for at least six months or longer as stipulated by the Partner organization. If an in-person rescore is deemed necessary after review of photos and discussion with the customer, a different Assessor should re-score the home. The final Score given to the customer should be reviewed by the Partner involved. If the Service Provider or Partner chooses to resolve the dispute through a refund of the customer's payment for the Score and

not issue a corrected score, the Service Provider or Partner must alert HEST that the Score is void, and void the Score in their own systems if possible.

- **Noncompliant behavior by the Remote Mentor, DTQA Auditor, or the Service Provider**

In the event a Remote Mentor, DTQA Auditor or Service Provider does not follow required protocols and performs poorly, HEST will notify the Partner and the Service Provider to alert them of concerns, including excessively slow implementation of QA procedures and/or a backlog of data review that is more than one quarter behind; insufficient communication with the Assessors about how to improve the quality of their products; lost or unmaintained data; non-responsiveness to data requests by HEST or per contracts with Assessors and their organizations; or any other condition HEST determines to be unacceptable performance. To the extent possible, HEST will provide technical feedback and work with the Service Provider to determine necessary next steps such as retraining or removal of mentors or DTQA Auditors, process improvements, etc. HEST reserves the right to remove the organization as a Service Provider at any time.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the Home Energy Score Team at assessor@ee.doe.gov

Home Energy Score Technical Team

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