COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Navigating CSWE Accreditation

Presentation to *The Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors*
March 6-10, 2024 | New Orleans, LA

Housekeeping

- **Post-conference** | Slide deck available for download at: https://www.cswe.org/accreditation/scopeandservices/training/
- QR codes in slides, *ready your phones if you wish!*
- We encourage self-care during this session!
  - Take a break
  - Step away
  - Stretch
  - Hydrate
  - Snack

Agenda

- Context & Framework
- Processes
- Documents
- Writing
- Continuous Compliance
- Toolkit
- Services
- Training
- Q&A

Context & Framework

CSWE Context: Two Pillars

Council on Social Work Education

Accreditor

- Board of Accreditation
  - Confers accreditation decisions
- Reaffirmation Site Visitors
- Fellowship Review Committee
- Staff (Department of Social Work Accreditation)
- Focus on **compliance** with EPAS

Education Association

- Board of Directors
  - Governs CSWE
- Commissions and Councils
- National Nominating Committee
- CSWE membership
- Fellowships
- Centers & Initiatives
- Focus on **best practices** and resources for EPAS and SW education

Welcome to the Wonderful World of Accreditation!

- Learning another language
- Technical (compliance) and art (best-practices) to designing a social work education program
  - **Accreditation** supports with: standards, interpretations, policies, and procedures
  - **Education association** supports with: idea-sharing, crowd-sourcing, examples, samples, and models
- Unity in the common language of national standards
- Resources and services to help translate standards in your unique context

Purpose of Accreditation

Accreditation is a system of peer-review for recognizing educational institutions and professional programs affiliated with those institutions as having a level of *performance*, *integrity*, and *quality* that entitles them to the *confidence* of the educational community and the public they serve.

The purposes of accreditation are:

- **quality assurance**
- **academic improvement**
- **professional preparation**
- **public accountability**

Intentional & Meaningful Engagement in Accreditation

- Elective and self-driven
- Helpful rather than a hurdle
- Approach with curiosity & strategic thinking
- ***Make the process work for you!***

CSWE Board of Accreditation (BOA)

- Recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to accredit baccalaureate and master's degree programs in the United States.
  - *International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service*
  - *Memorandum of understanding with Canadian social work accreditor*

- BOA members:
  - Fellow social work educators, practitioners, and public member(s)
  - Volunteers with a background in social work education
  - Active CSWE membership
  - At least 2-years site visitor experience

Peer-Review Process

- Accreditation is a peer-review
- BOA is the sole and final arbiter of compliance
    - *CSWE staff cannot determine compliance*

Services with Social Work Values

Myth: Asking an accrediting organization for help alerts it that the program should be placed on unofficial watch for future scrutiny.

- **Accrediting organizations welcome questions from programs!**
- Supportive accountability model
- Consultations provided by CSWE accreditation staff are **confidential** (policy 1.4, Accreditation Policy Handbook)

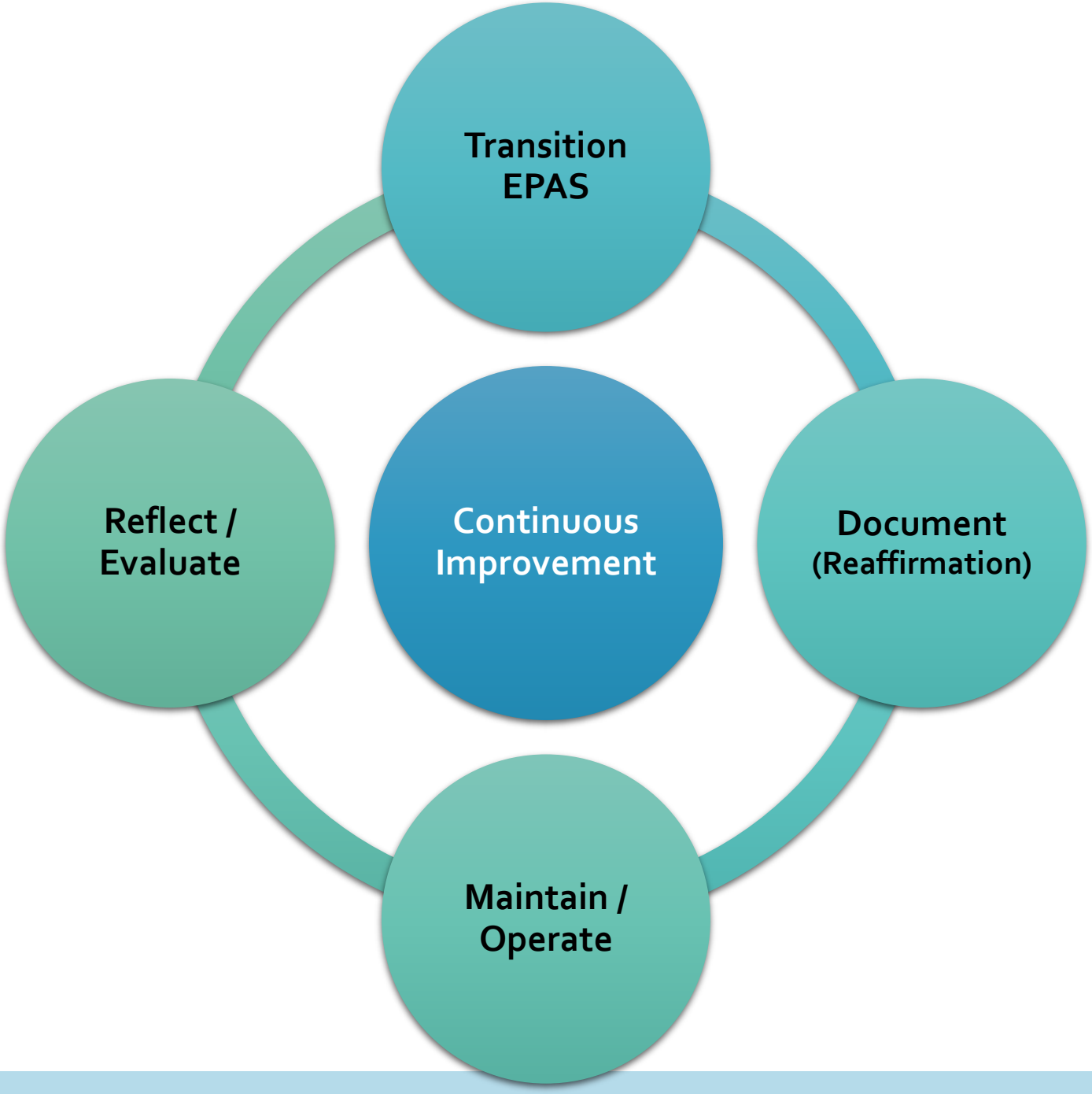
Accreditation as a Process

The process expands beyond quality control. Accreditation is a *developmental*, *strategic*, and *renewal or changemaking* process by which program stakeholders craft educational experiences to prepare *competent social work practitioners*. While accreditation is reviewed at **periodic intervals**, programs are expected to **maintain ongoing compliance**.

Accreditation can be an impetus for:

- Data-informed decision-making
- Innovation
- Quality improvement

Accreditation is <u>not</u> a one-time event.


Transition EPAS
Document (Reaffirmation)
Maintain / Operate
Reflect / Evaluate
Continuous Improvement

Accreditation as a Team Effort

- Encourage all administrators, full-time and part-time faculty, staff, students, field instructors, board members and other relevant program stakeholders to understand and actively participate in the accreditation process.

- Continuous accreditation efforts, including periodic reaffirmation reviews, are owned by and affect the entire program.

- Team-based approaches are highly recommended.

- Match team members by strengths and/or expertise.

- Optional Tool: Team Approach Grid

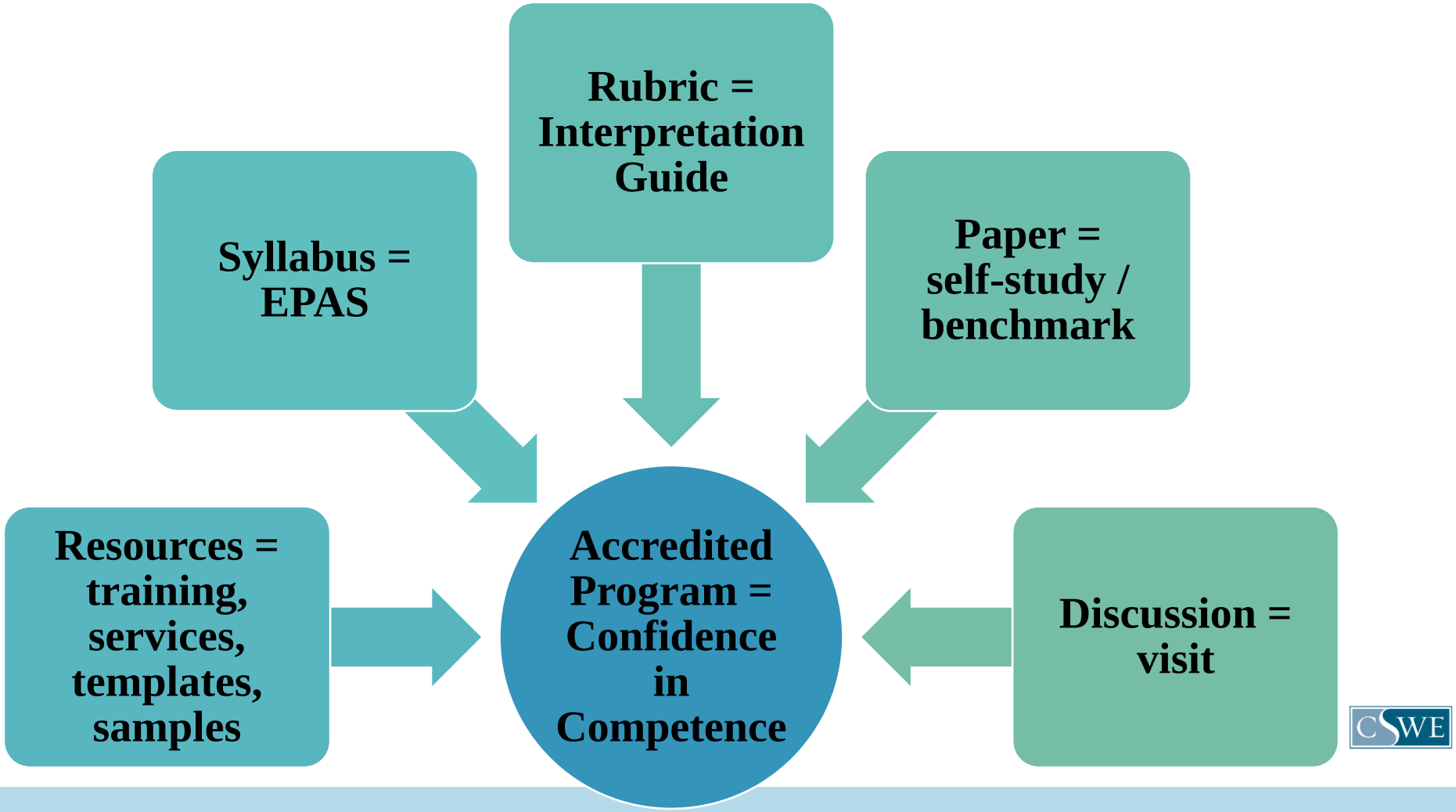
CSWE Context: Two Pillars

Council on Social Work Education

Accreditor	Education Association
• Board of Accreditation - Confers accreditation decisions • Reaffirmation Site Visitors • Fellowship Review Committee • Staff (Department of Social Work Accreditation) • Focus on **compliance** with EPAS	• Board of Directors - Governs CSWE • Commissions and Councils • National Nominating Committee • CSWE membership • Fellowships • Centers & Initiatives • Focus on **best practices** and resources for EPAS and SW education

Inputs

Best-Practices, Innovation, Literature, & Networking



Accreditation Processes

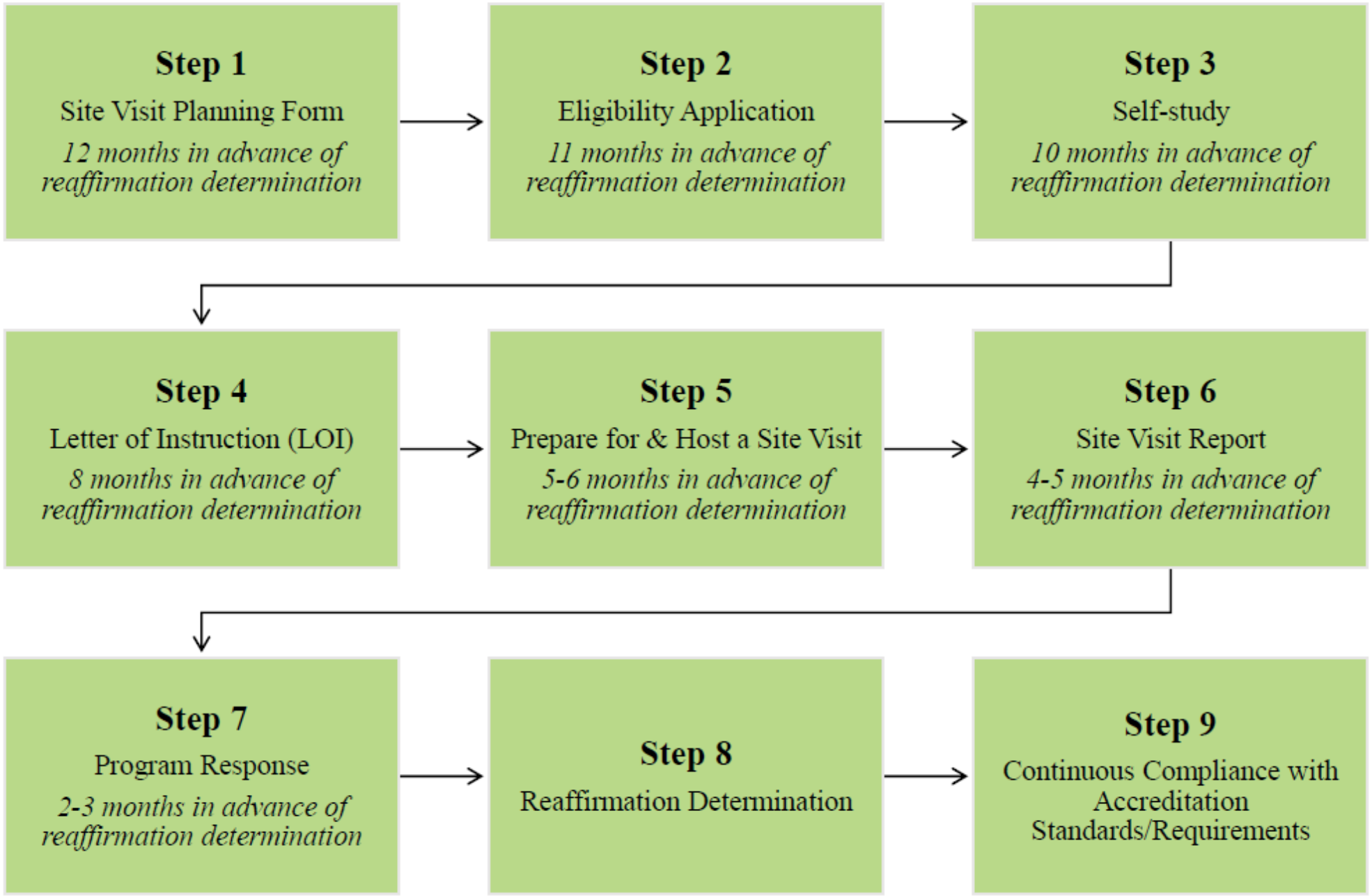
Common Accreditation Processes

- Reaffirmation | 8-year cycles
- Candidacy | 3-year benchmarking

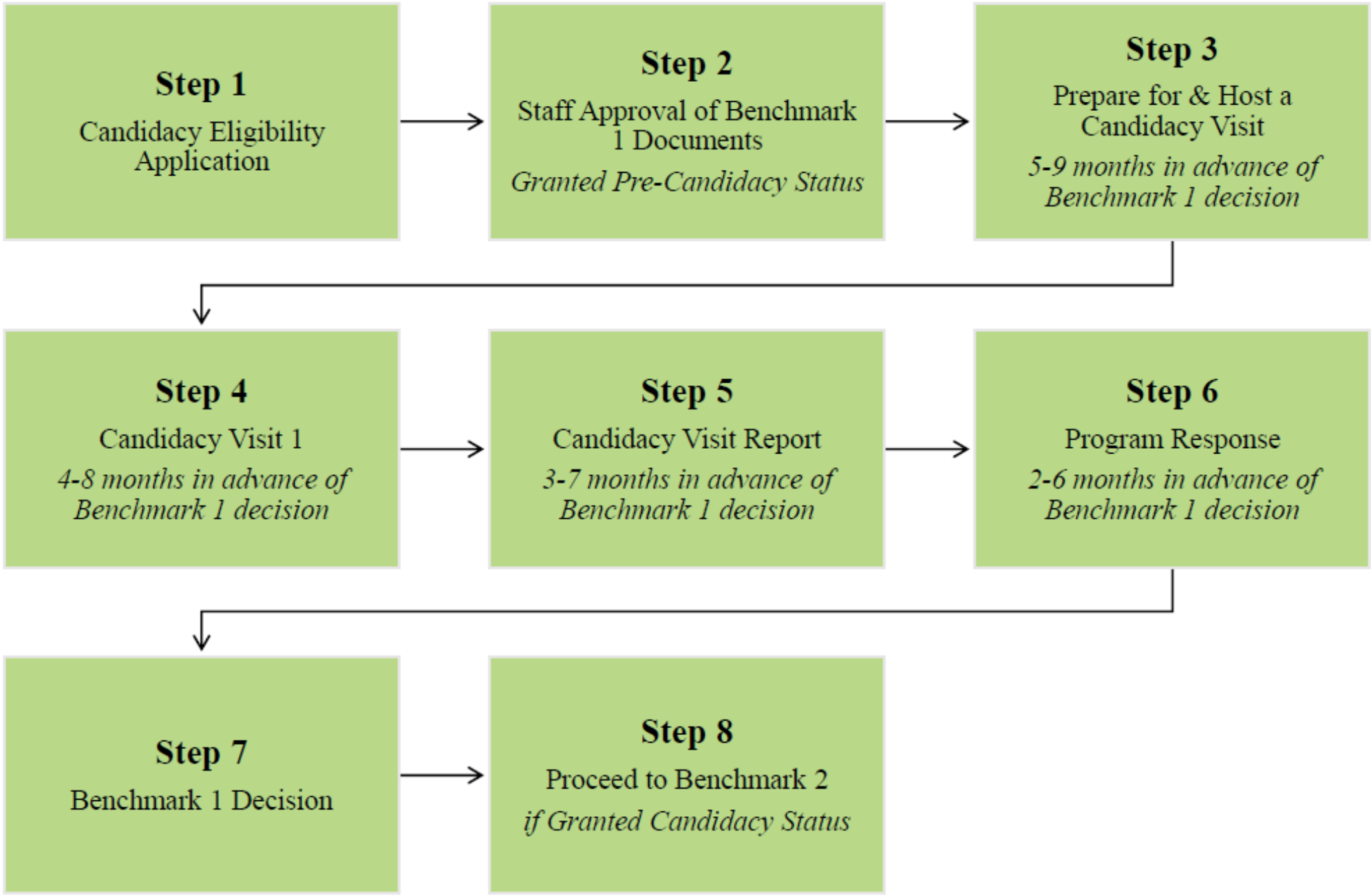
- Program Changes
  - Policy 4.9, Accreditation Policy Handbook
  - Notification of changes that may impact compliance with the EPAS
  - Database / directory listing updates
  - Substantive Change Proposals

- Annual collection of website hyperlinks to assessment reports
  - Competency-based student learning outcomes / data posted on programs' website
  - Collected within 2-years at all times

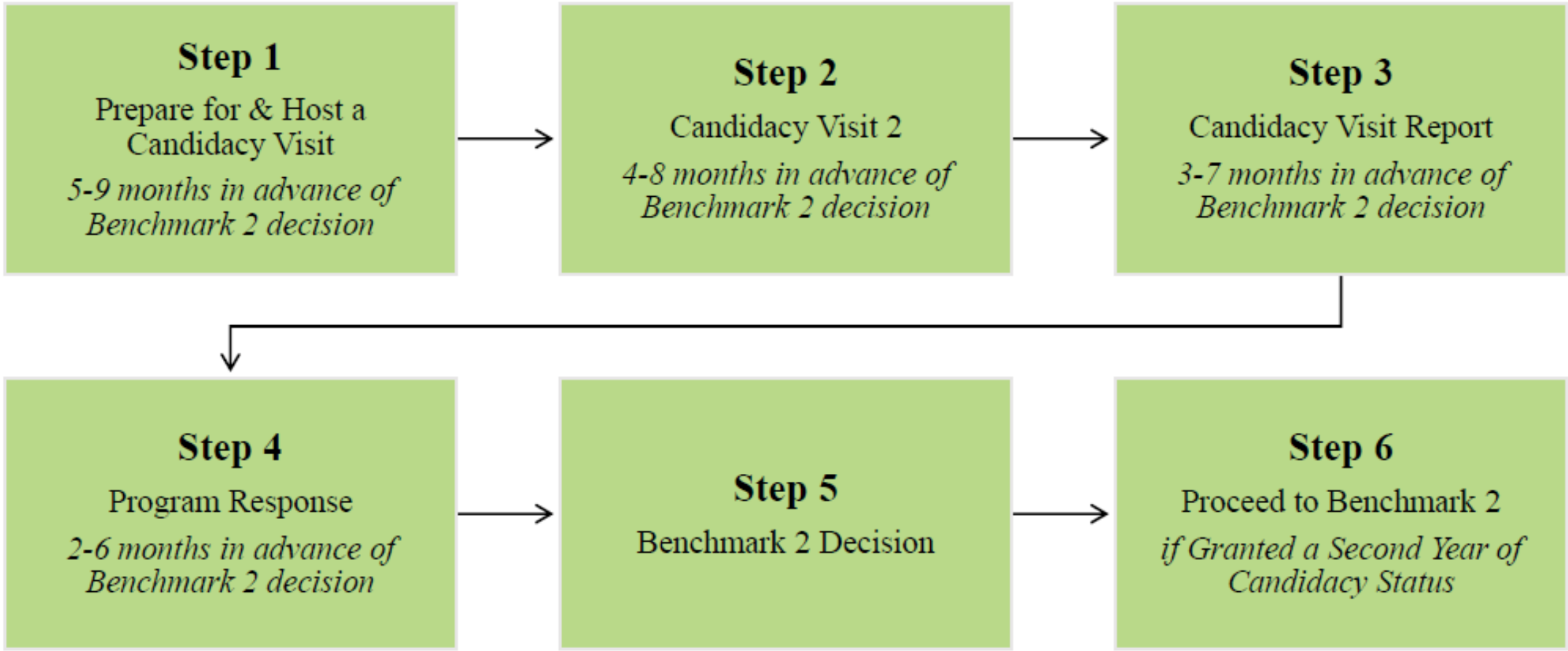
Reaffirmation Process Overview



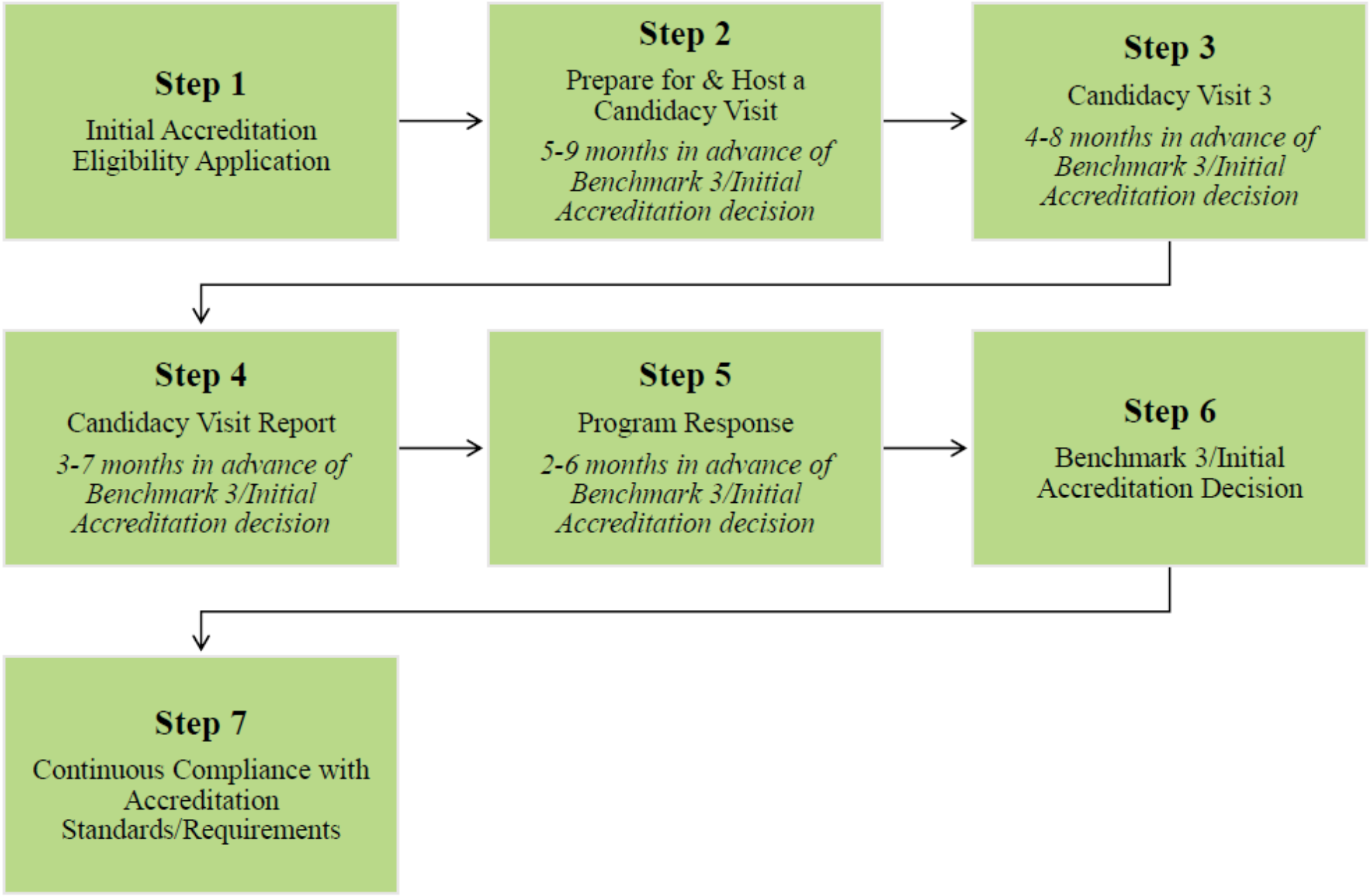
Candidacy | Benchmark 1 - Process Overview



Candidacy | Benchmark 2 - Process Overview



Candidacy | Benchmark 3/Initial Accreditation - Process Overview



Decision Types

- Familiarize yourself with the possible decision types
- View the frequency each decision type is issued
- Set reasonable expectations as the vast majority of reviews include requests for clarification

- *Rare, yet important:* Revise & resubmit requests (policy 4.7, Accreditation Policy Handbook)
  - Usage of outdated forms, templates, or accreditation materials
  - Formatting and submission errors
  - Failure to address all accreditation standards or requirements
  - Failure to address all program options

Guidance for Successful Accreditation Reviews

- Learn and understand the EPAS and factual interpretations
- Apply accreditation knowledge to renew program operations or retool, update, or change as needed
- Evaluate the program's alignment with the EPAS via writing the self-study or benchmark document
- Set realistic expectations by understanding potential BOA decision types and be open to BOA's clarifying questions
- Continuously utilize accreditation resources and services to bridge gaps in knowledge deepen comprehension of the EPAS and accreditation processes

Accreditation Documents

Reaffirmation Self-study & Candidacy Benchmarks

- Program's documentation / evidence of compliance after self-evaluative processes
- Tell your program's story
- Technical evaluative report
  - Documenting compliance with the accreditation standards
- Use templates
- Use Interpretation Guide as a checklist

Additional Types of Documents

- ***Candidacy / Site Visit Report*** – Findings from discussion / dialogue about program's plan for compliance. Visitors do not determine compliance. They collect clarifying information, verify facts, and summarize objective findings.

- ***Program Response*** – Program's documentation / evidence of compliance following a visit. Program has final word / opportunity to demonstrate compliance to the commission.

- ***Reports*** – Program's documentation / evidence of compliance typically following the BOA's decision. These include progress reports and restoration reports.

- ***Substantive Change Proposals*** – Program's plan for compliance when proposing a significant change to the program such as a new location-based or online program option.

CSWE-BOA Approach to Accreditation Reviews

- Based on integrity and trust
  - Not investigative or "gotcha!" approach
  - Shared goal in quality education & commitment to the profession

- Self-evaluation (i.e., self-study)
  - Document compliance
  - **Continuous improvement:**
    - Reflective to identify strengths and areas for growth
    - Data-informed decision-making

- Multi-phased to provide due process
- Accountability via minimum compliance with the EPAS

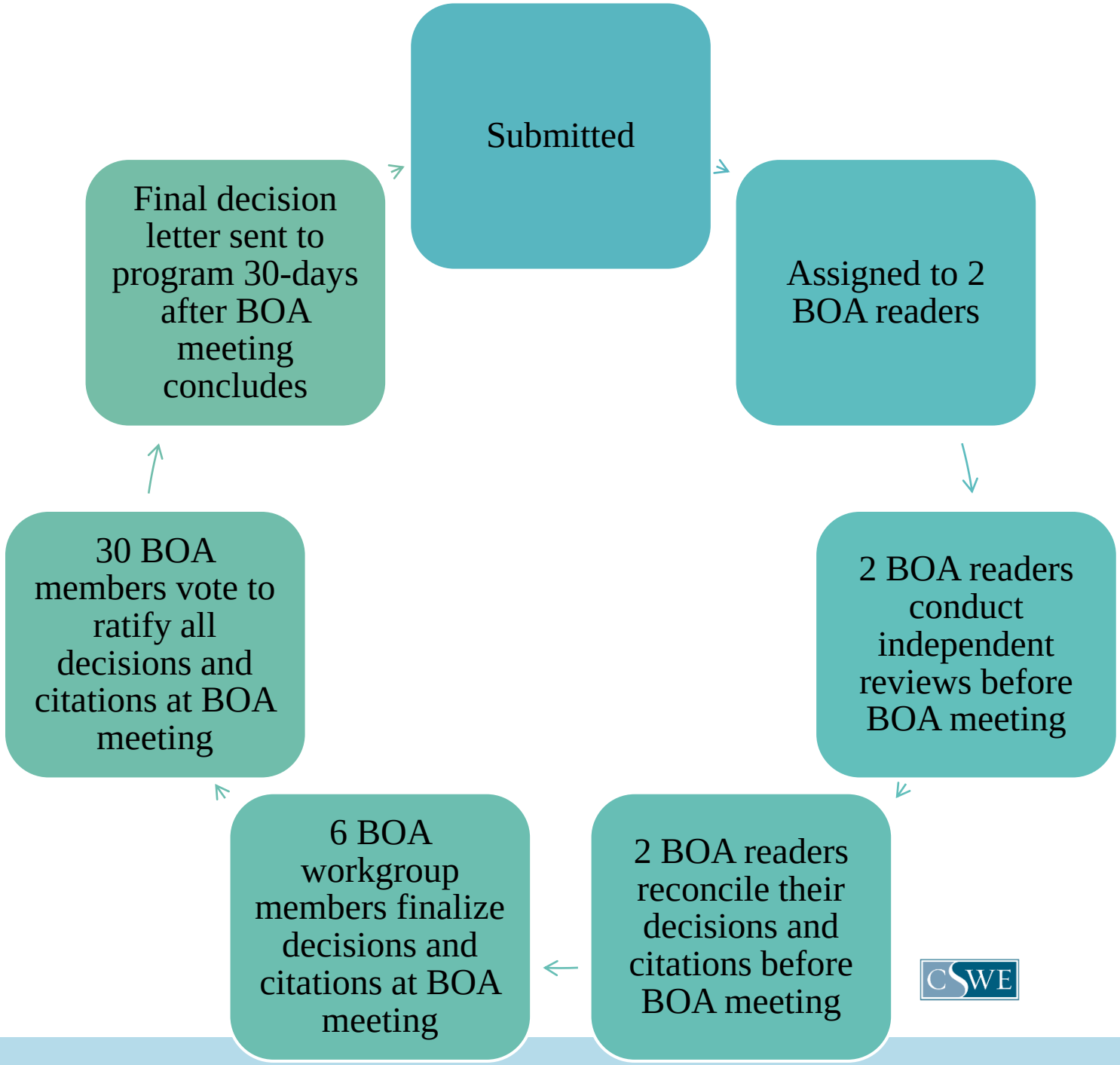
Minimum Compliance

- Quality threshold
- Lens through which BOA conducts reviews
- Programs to set goals for minimum compliance

- Welcome to go above and beyond or incorporate best-practices *as long as* the program is meeting the standard
- Flexibility to craft excellent educational experiences that exceed the EPAS requirements
  - **No two programs are the same!**

- CSWE-BOA sets the floor via the EPAS; programs set the ceiling!

Life Cycle of an Accreditation Document



Writing an Accreditation Document

Writing Tips

- Write clearly and concisely
  - BOA cannot assume anything
  - General / vague responses may prompt clarifying questions from BOA
  - Excessive narrative can accidentally bury the required compliance documentation
- Use the language in the standard in your responses
- Employ one final editor to give the document one cohesive voice
- Most common reasons for a citation:
  1. Failing to address the BOA's official interpretation of the standard (vs. the program's assumed interpretation)
  2. Failing to clearly address one or more elements of the standard
  3. Failing to explicitly address each program option in response to each standard

Organizing Tips

- Create a central file on your institution's shared drive (e.g., OneDrive, SharePoint, Google Drive, etc.)
- Organize documents by year
- Be sure files and documents are searchable (not scanned)

- Leave your legacy/successor well-organized documents
- Program responsible for record-keeping documents; yet accreditation staff can reissue BOA decision letters if lost (policy 4.1, Accreditation Policy Handbook)

- **New!** Accreditation certificates now mailed after reaffirmation is achieved

Continuous Compliance

Celebrate!

- Recognize your worthy work preparing social work practitioners!

- Honor contributors and reward your team for their ability to both map the big picture and document the details ☺

Maintaining Compliance Between Review Cycles

- 8-year review cycles with no interim reports
  - **Framing:** Asking BOA to issue reasonable assurance to the public and constituents that the program is providing quality social work education for nearly the next decade

- Update assessment of competency-based student learning outcomes minimally every 2-years via required form
  - *Data must be collected within 2-years at all times*

- Programs are not static and continuous quality improvement processes are encouraged, including *creativity*, *innovation*, and *pilots*

Record Audit

- Periodic update to all fields in a program's internal database record and external directory listing
- Used to collect hyperlinks to webpage where required data/outcomes form is posted
- **Important Note:** Annual survey of social work programs is not a function of accreditation and not used to collect compliance information!
- Audit is separate from annual survey

Additional Accreditation Processes

- Submit substantive change proposals via required template
  - Policy 4.9 in the Accreditation Policy Handbook
- Self-report issues that may impact compliance with the EPAS
  - Policy 4.9 in the Accreditation Policy Handbook
- *Optional:* Request a clarification letter or special compliance review if unable to maintain compliance
  - Policy 4.10 in the Accreditation Policy Handbook
- *Optional:* Request waivers to certain accreditation standards
  - Policy 4.5 in the Accreditation Policy Handbook

Primary Contact

- Self-report database/directory listing updates via required form
  - Policy 4.9 in the Accreditation Policy Handbook

- Keep primary contact current to receive:
  - Access to services
  - Communications
  - Newsletters
  - Invoices

Check-in & Test Your Understanding

- Check with accreditation staff before thinking your program "isn't allowed" to do something.
  - **Very few standards that speak to what a program can't do.**

- Rather, standards primarily ensure that you have a policy, procedures, criteria, process, or mechanism; not what the content is.

- Operations, offerings, polices, procedures and other programmatic elements may be more traditional or innovative.

- Many myths to bust in social work education – *so, be sure to ask*!

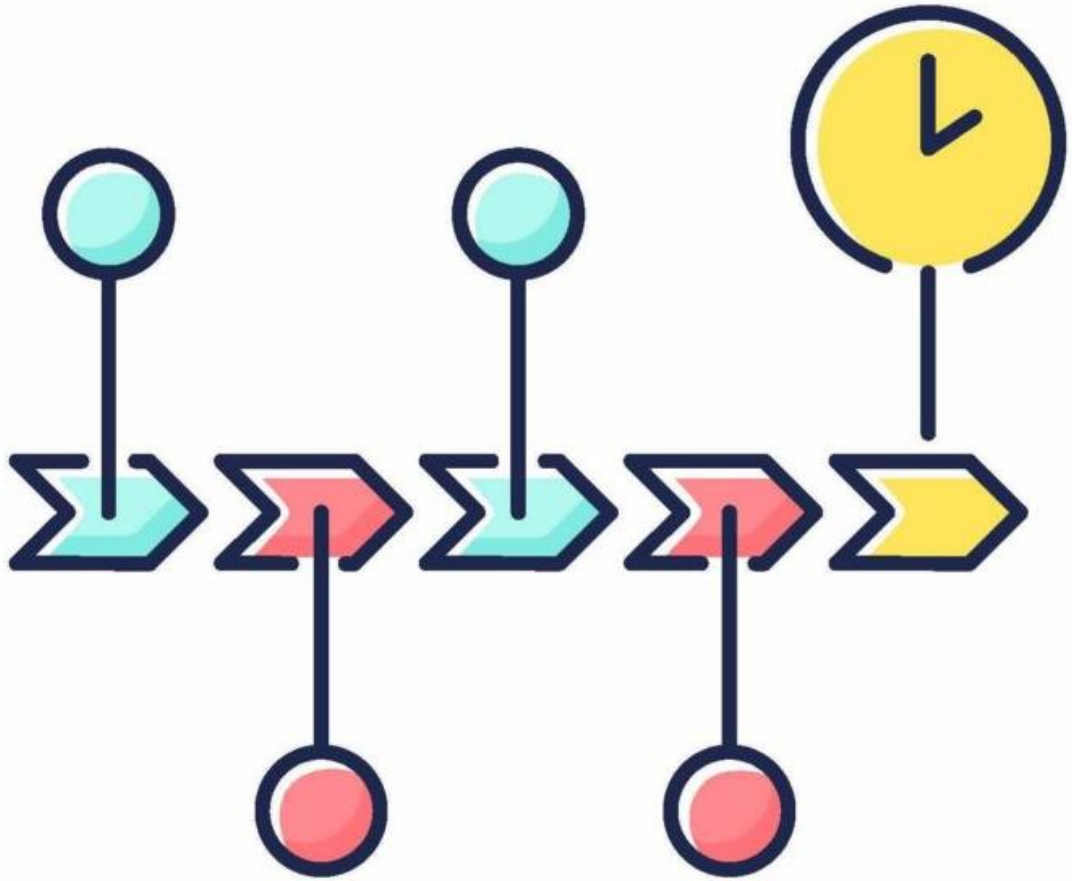
2022 EPAS Accreditation Toolkit

Unity Date

All accredited programs are expected to operate under the 2022 EPAS by **July 1, 2025 (unless otherwise noted in the implementation timeline).**

2022 EPAS Implementation Timeline

www.cswe.org/2022EPAStimeline



2022 EPAS Accreditation Toolkit

www.cswe.org/2022EPAStoolkit

Required Templates

- Required Benchmark 1 Template
- Required Benchmark 2 Template
- Required Reaffirmation/Initial Accreditation Self-Study Template

Accreditation Standard 4.1.5: The program does not grant social work course credit for life experience or previous work experience.

a. The program provides the policy indicating that it does not grant social work course credit for life experience or previous work experience.

The policy explicitly states that the social work program does not grant social work course credit for: 1) life experience, and 2) previous work experience:

☐ Yes
☐ No

Insert full policy text here

b. The program describes how this policy is articulated.

Insert text here

c. The program addresses all program options.

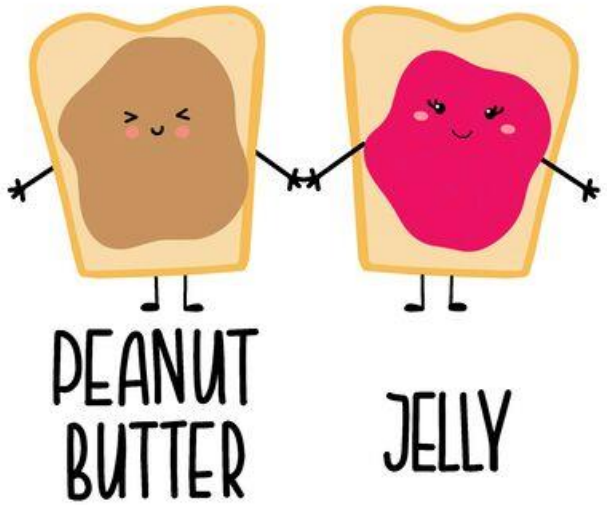
Check One:

☐ The program has only one (1) option.
☐ Our response/compliance plan is the same for all program options.
☐ Our response/compliance plan differs between program options in the following ways:

[Delete this help text before submission: Insert text here, if applicable and the program complies differently across program options]

Accreditation is paperless!

Interpretation Guide



EPAS + IG = BFF

2022 EPAS INTERPRETATIONS

Grid Navigation Key

Educational Policy

Accreditation Standard (AS)

COMPLIANCE STATEMENTS	BOARD OF ACCREDITATION (BOA) INTERPRETATIONS & WRITING CHECKLIST	DEFINITIONS & TIPS
Compliance statements are criteria used by the BOA to evaluate the program's written narrative for compliance with the accreditation standard.	• Interpretations further clarify the BOA's required expectations for programs to meet each accreditation standard. • This column also provides guidance for developing clear and concise narratives to demonstrate compliance in accreditation documents.	• **Definitions** of uncommon words within each standard are linked to the glossary in this column. • Tips are optional guidance to further strengthen the program's compliance with the accreditation standard and enhance written compliance narratives in accreditation documents.

Accreditation Policy Handbook

www.cswe.org/accreditationpolicies

Council on Social Work Education

Board of Accreditation (BOA)
Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA)

ACCREDITATION POLICY HANDBOOK

for Baccalaureate and Master's Social Work Program Accreditation

version 9.2023

1. **Introduction to Accreditation**
2. **CSWE Department of Social Work Accreditation Services and Resources**
3. **Board of Accreditation**
4. **Accreditation Processes**
5. **Candidacy & Initial Accreditation**
6. **Reaffirmation**

Accreditation Services

Accreditation Services

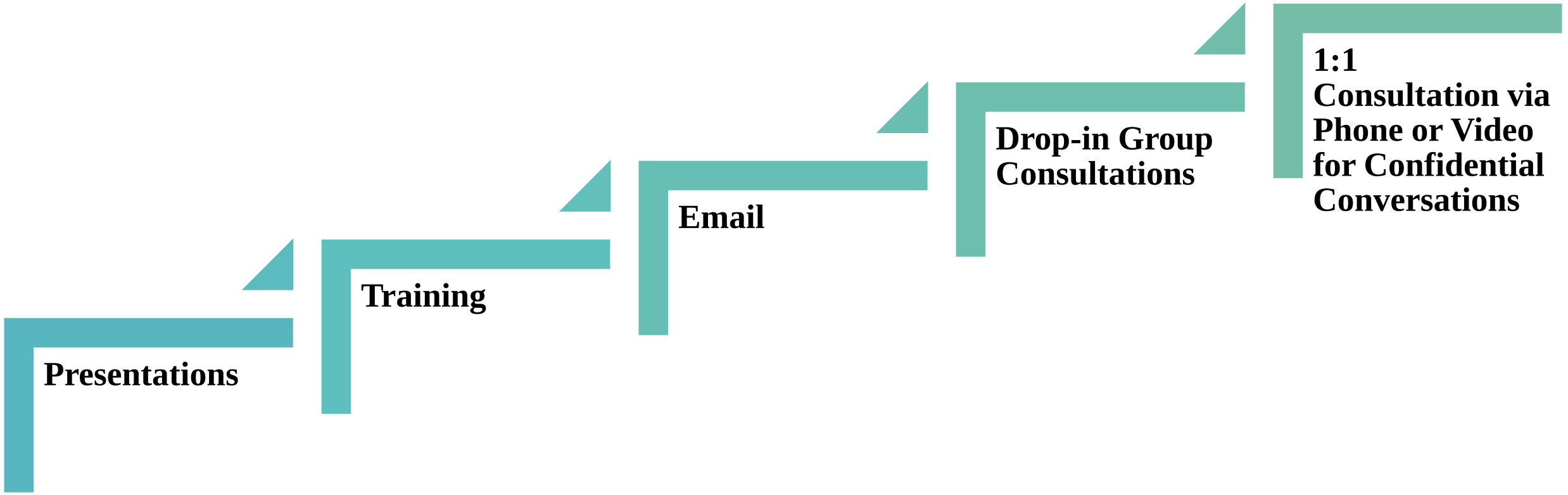
www.cswe.org/accreditationservices

- Overview/Scope
- Training
- New Applicant Program Drop-in Consults
- Substantive Change Process Drop-in Consults
- International Social Work Degree Review (ISWDRES)

Accreditation Services

- **Consultations**
- **Trainings**
- Year-round
- **Professional Conferences**
- **Resources & Communication**

Continuum of Services



Accreditation Training

2022 EPAS Reaffirmation Training

www.cswe.org/accreditationtraining

- Designed for CSWE-accredited baccalaureate and master's social work education programs
- This hybrid training model consists of two components:

Self-paced online learning modules via the CSWE Learning Academy

Live drop-in question and answer (Q&A) sessions via Zoom

Major Changes: 2015 EPAS vs. 2022 EPAS

What are the major changes between the 2015 EPAS and 2022 EPAS?

2022 EPAS FAQs, question #17

Q & A

Questions? Thoughts? Ideas? Concerns? Let us know!

CSWE Opportunities

How can BPD members be actively involved in CSWE?

• CSWE encourages and welcomes members of accredited and candidate programs to participate in the volunteer-based shared governance model!

- Join a CSWE Commission or Council
- Serve as a certified site visitor for reaffirmation of accreditation reviews
- Join the Board of Accreditation *(site visit experience required)*

How can BPD members be actively involved in CSWE?

- Submit or review proposals for the Annual Program Meeting (APM)

•Become a Journal on Social Work Education (JSWE) reviewer

• Read CSWE Compass member newsletter for opportunities to participate, contribute, and organize in your interests as members of our national organization – **your voice matter**!