



Managing Program Participation Guidance

April 2025 | Version 2



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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe how currently participating Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) can manage program participation in the Medicare Shared Savings Program (Shared Savings Program) within their current agreement period during the Application and Change Request Cycle. In addition, please refer to the Shared Savings Program's regulations, which can be accessed through the [Program Statutes & Regulations webpage](#) of the Shared Savings Program website.

Currently participating ACOs can take the following actions during the annual Application and Change Request Cycle:

- Submit a Participation Options change request.
- Elect to remain in a one-sided risk model for the remainder of the agreement period.
- Elect to advance along the glide path from a one-sided risk model to a two-sided risk model and establish a repayment mechanism.
- Select the Minimum Savings Rate (MSR)/Minimum Loss Rate (MLR) for the remaining duration of the ACO's agreement period (only for ACOs moving from one-sided to two-sided risk).
- Change beneficiary assignment methodology. Modify the ACO Participant List by adding or deleting ACO participants. Apply for a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) 3-Day Rule Waiver and/or modify the SNF Affiliate List. Apply for a Beneficiary Incentive Program (BIP).

Please refer to [Key Change Request Cycle Actions and Deadlines](#) in the Knowledge Library tab in the [ACO Management System \(ACO-MS\)](#) and the [Application Types & Timeline webpage](#) to ensure change request submissions and other actions are submitted in a timely manner.

This guide is not intended for an ACO who is a renewal or early renewal applicant. For those ACOs, refer to the [Application Reference Manual](#). Please note that the following actions require an ACO to begin a new agreement period and cannot be completed as a change request cycle action:

- Moving from Level E of the BASIC track to the ENHANCED track.
- Moving from the ENHANCED track to Level E of the BASIC track.
- Changing MSR/MLR.

Information about the impacts of withdrawing an application can also be found in the *Application Reference Manual*.

1.1 HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This document is designed to allow users to identify important action items and expectations, including which materials to submit for each submission deadline. Throughout this document, the following symbols highlight important information about resources and tips.

Published Resource Available



This icon appears throughout the manual when an existing published resource is available for further guidance.

Tips for Success



This callout references best practices and helpful reminders.

IMPORTANT!



This callout refers to important information for ACOs to note.

2 Participation Options Change Requests

A Participation Options change request allows an ACO user to change the ACO's selected beneficiary assignment methodology, advance along the BASIC track's glide path, and for ACOs moving from a one-sided to a two-sided risk model, select the MSR/MLR for the remainder of the ACO's agreement period. Eligible ACOs can submit a Participation Options change request to make the election remain in Level A of the BASIC track for the remainder of the agreement period.

Published Resources Available



- [Application Types & Timeline webpage](#)
- [Key Change Request Cycle Actions and Deadlines for Performance Year Beginning on January 1, 2026](#)

2.1 BENEFICIARY ASSIGNMENT METHODOLOGY AND ASSIGNMENT ESTIMATES

Currently participating ACOs may elect to change their beneficiary assignment methodology during the annual change request cycle. As a reminder, the two assignment methodologies (Prospective Assignment and Preliminary Prospective Assignment with Retrospective Reconciliation) are used by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to determine the population of beneficiaries for which an ACO is accountable.

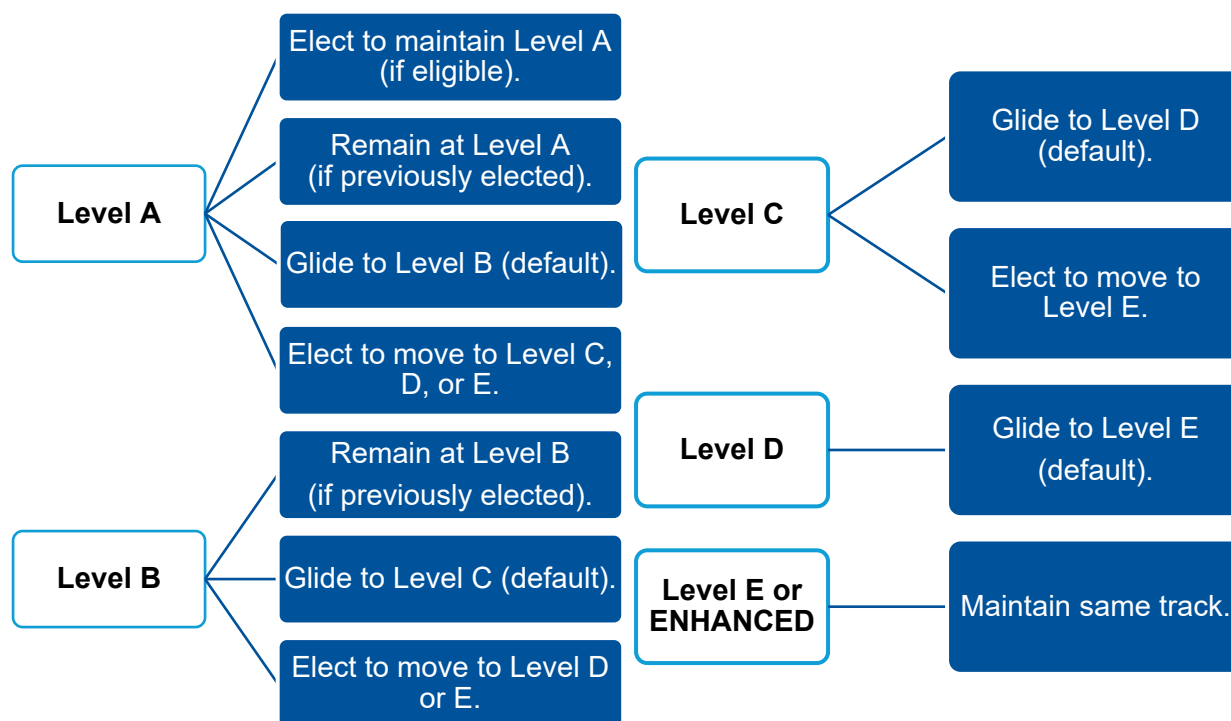
ACOs can initiate a Participation Options change request from the Agreement Details subtab of the My ACOs tab in [ACO-MS](#) by clicking the pencil icon in the "Agreement Information" box.

CMS will provide ACOs with assigned beneficiary estimates for both methodologies throughout the annual application and change request cycle via the *Participation Options Report*, found within the Reporting Tab in ACO-MS (see section 6.2 for more information). These estimates are initially provided at the ACO participant level and for both assignment methodologies; however, at the time of Phase 1 Final Dispositions, CMS will provide the assignment counts at the ACO level and for the ACOs' selected assignment methodology only. More information can be found in the Beneficiary Assignment Estimates section below.

2.2 TRACK SELECTION OPTIONS FOR CURRENTLY PARTICIPATING ACOS

Initial track eligibility for currently participating ACOs for the next performance year will be determined by the ACO's track selection from the preceding performance year. A currently participating ACO on the BASIC track's glide path will automatically advance (or "glide") to the next level by default. However, during the annual change request cycle, the ACO has the option to move to a higher level of the glide path than the level to which the ACO would otherwise automatically advance. A subset of currently participating ACOs that are inexperienced with performance-based risk may also elect to maintain participation in Level A of the BASIC track for the remainder of their agreement period.

The diagram below displays the participation options available to currently participating ACOs for the next performance year based on their track/level for the current performance year. The white boxes display the ACO's track/level in the current performance year. The blue boxes display the participation options available for the next performance year. For example, an ACO currently participating in Level A of the BASIC track may elect to remain in Level A (if eligible) or remain in Level A if the ACO previously made that election, automatically advance to Level B, or elect to move to Level C, D, or E. More information on how ACOs can select the additional options can be found in the sections below.



2.3 ADVANCING ALONG THE GLIDE PATH

At the start of the next performance year, ACOs participating in the BASIC track's glide path will automatically advance to the next level along with the progression of risk/reward levels; alternatively, they may elect to move more quickly to a higher level of risk/reward over the course of their agreement period.

The only **exception** is ACOs that elect to maintain participation in a one-sided model of the BASIC track for the remainder of their agreement period.

An ACO that began an agreement period in Level A as of January 1st of the current performance year will automatically advance to Level B, but the ACO can elect to remain in Level A via the submission of a Participation Options change request.

An ACO that made the election to remain in Level A in a previous performance year does not need to take further action on an annual basis because the ACO will not advance automatically in performance years after the election is made. However, the ACO can still elect to advance to a higher level of the BASIC track by submitting a Participation Options change request.

Refer to the "[Election to Maintain Participation in a One-Sided Model](#)" section below for additional information.

2.3.1 Moving from Level A to Level B or Moving within Two-Sided Risk

The following two groups of ACOs automatically advancing along the glide path will **not** need to submit a Participation Options change request:

- ACOs automatically advancing from Level A to Level B.

- ACOs automatically advancing within two-sided risk (i.e., from Level C to Level D or from Level D to Level E).

2.3.2 Moving from Level B to Level C

ACOs automatically advancing from Level B (a one-sided risk model) to Level C (a two-sided risk model) **must submit** a Participation Options change request to advance to Level C and to select their MSR/MLR for the agreement period.

The Participation Options change request will be automatically generated for these ACOs and will be available via the Dashboard in ACO-MS. The change request will default to Level C of the BASIC track. However, an ACO can choose a higher level of risk/reward if desired.

- ACO must select an MSR/MLR that will be in effect for the remainder of the agreement period.
- ACOs will have the option to change their beneficiary assignment methodology, if desired. ACO-MS will default to the ACO's currently selected beneficiary assignment methodology.

After submitting a Participation Options change request to move from a one-sided to a two-sided risk model, a repayment mechanism task will automatically generate on the ACO's Dashboard. Navigate to the Dashboard and click on the pending repayment mechanism task.

IMPORTANT!



- ACOs required to participate under two-sided risk must establish an adequate repayment mechanism prior to the start of their first performance year under two-sided risk.
- ACOs required to move to a two-sided risk model that fail to establish an adequate repayment mechanism may be involuntarily terminated ([42 CFR § 425.204\(f\)](#)).

2.3.3 Voluntarily Elect to Move to a Higher Level of Risk/Reward

ACOs in the BASIC track's glide path that want to voluntarily elect to move to a higher level of risk/reward than would normally apply (e.g., Level A to Level C, or Level C to Level E) must submit a Participation Options change request to initiate this change.

ACOs can initiate a Participation Options change request from the ACO's Agreement Details subtab of the My ACOs tab by clicking the pencil icon in the "Agreement Information" box.

After submitting a Participation Options change request to move from a one-sided to a two-sided risk model (e.g., Level A to Level C), a repayment mechanism task will automatically

generate on the ACO's Dashboard. Navigate to the Dashboard and click on the pending repayment mechanism task.

Published Resource Available



- [Repayment Mechanism Arrangements Guidance](#)

2.4 ELECTION TO MAINTAIN A PARTICIPATION IN A ONE-SIDED MODEL

A **subset** of currently participating ACOs that are inexperienced with performance-based risk may elect to maintain participation in a one-sided model for the remainder of their agreement period.

Per [42 CFR § 425.600\(a\)\(4\)\(i\)\(B\)\(2\)\(vii\)](#), ACOs participating in Level A or B of the BASIC track that started their agreement period **prior to January 1, 2024**, previously had the option to elect to maintain participation in the same level for the remainder of their agreement period. These ACOs do not need to take any action as part of the change request cycle to remain in a one-sided model because they have already made the election.

Per [42 CFR § 425.600\(a\)\(4\)\(i\)\(C\)\(3\)](#), ACOs participating in Level A of the BASIC track that started their agreement period **on or after January 1, 2024**, have the option to elect to maintain participation in Level A for the remainder of their current agreement period.

IMPORTANT!



This election must be made during the annual change request cycle prior to the ACO's second performance year.

ACOs can initiate a Participation Options change request from the ACO's Agreement Details subtab of the My ACOs tab by clicking the pencil icon in the "Agreement Information" box.

2.5 WITHDRAWING A PARTICIPATION OPTIONS CHANGE REQUEST

If the ACO no longer wants to make the change(s) included in a Participation Options change request and CMS has not yet issued a disposition, the ACO can withdraw the request in the Pending Disposition subtab of the Change Request tab.

1. Select the Change Request tab on the left-side menu of ACO-MS and navigate to the Pending Disposition subtab. Select your ACO.
2. Select the change request you would like to withdraw. Each change request is assigned a unique change request ID and you may search for this ID within the subtab.

- Click “Withdraw” on the left side of the change request and confirm your selection. This will immediately withdraw the change request and the action may not be undone.

Tips for Success



Participation Options change requests cannot be edited once submitted. ACOs must therefore withdraw the pending Participation Options change request before submitting a new Participation Options change request with the updated selections. New Participation Options change requests can only be submitted through the established deadlines found on [Key Change Request Cycle Actions & Deadlines](#).

An ACO automatically transitioning to two-sided risk cannot withdraw their pending Participation Options change request unless they are terminating their participation in the Shared Savings Program.

Additionally, withdrawing a Participation Options change request to transition to two-sided risk will automatically withdraw the repayment mechanism task and/or a SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver or BIP application.

Once CMS has issued a disposition, ACOs will not be able to withdraw the request.

3 Beneficiary Assignment Estimates – General Information and Methodology

3.1 GENERAL INFORMATION AND METHODOLOGY

Throughout the application and change request cycle, CMS provides ACOs with assigned beneficiary estimates for the upcoming performance year via ACO-MS. These estimates can be found in several different locations in ACO-MS. All beneficiary assignment information should be considered **estimates** that are subject to change.

CMS produces the beneficiary assignment estimates that are displayed in ACO-MS by utilizing a methodology that generates estimates at the ACO participant taxpayer identification number (TIN) level. The ACO participant TIN-level estimates are also used to produce ACO entity-level estimates, inclusive of and across all ACO participants on an ACO’s proposed ACO Participant List.

- ACOs can see how each of the previously approved and proposed ACO participants impact the ACO’s overall assignment estimate.
- ACOs receive assignment estimates reflecting both their selected methodology and the alternative methodology.
- Estimates are provided for the upcoming performance year as well as the three prior years, labeled as benchmark years (BYs). The BY estimates apply to the BYs for an ACO beginning a new agreement period on January 1st of the upcoming performance year.

- For currently participating ACOs, the BY assignment estimates for the three prior years are for informational purposes only. The BYs for a currently participating ACO are earlier years than those for an applicant ACO.
- To ensure compliance with [CMS cell suppression policy](#), if an ACO or ACO participant TIN is estimated to have between one and ten assigned beneficiaries, the assignment estimate for that ACO or ACO participant TIN is subject to suppression (displayed as “**”). Assignment estimates for ACO participant TINs that are subject to suppression **are not** included in calculations of ACO-level values displayed in ACO-MS.

Assignment Estimates

The approach used to produce assignment estimates will generally overestimate an ACO’s assigned beneficiary population. This is especially true for ACOs that select the preliminary prospective assignment with retrospective reconciliation methodology. The overestimation occurs because of limitations of the estimation approach that do not allow CMS to reflect all beneficiary eligibility and exclusion criteria that are incorporated into the assignment methodology used for operational purposes.

An ACO’s assigned beneficiary population can be affected by several factors, including:

- Changes to the ACO’s Participant List (including the submission and/or withdrawal of ACO participant change requests and the deletion of ACO participants).
- The ACO’s selected assignment methodology.
- Changes to other ACOs’ Participant Lists or selected assignment methodology.

3.2 BENEFICIARY ASSIGNMENT ESTIMATES – ACO-MS LOCATIONS

The beneficiary assignment estimates described above are available in several places in ACO-MS, and the ACO-level estimates vary throughout the application and change request cycle based on changes to the ACO Participant List, as well as any deficiencies associated with individual change requests.

An estimate will be provided for each ACO participant as the ACO submits a change request to add the ACO participant to the ACO Participant List. For additional information on adding ACO participants, refer to the [ACO Participant List Change Requests in ACO-MS](#) tip sheet.

ACO participant- and ACO-level estimates are also available in the Beneficiary Assignment Estimates view in the ACO Participants subtab, the Application Cycle subtab, and within the downloadable *Participation Options Report*. Beneficiary assignment estimates for a currently participating ACO’s previously approved ACO participants can be found in Beneficiary Assignment Estimates view in the ACO Participants subtab.

Published Resource Available



Shared Savings and Losses, Assignment and Quality Performance Standard Methodology Specifications, located on the [Program Guidance & Specifications webpage](#).

4 Modifications to the ACO Participant List

During the annual change request cycle, ACOs may modify their ACO Participant List by adding or deleting ACO participants. The ACO Participant List, including any changes made during the annual change request cycle, is a primary factor in determining how ACOs can participate in the Shared Savings Program—both initially and as they continue participation during an agreement period. Changes to the ACO Participant List can affect an ACO's revenue determination as well as whether an ACO is determined to be experienced with performance-based risk, amongst other factors. These changes can be tracked throughout the change request cycle via the *Participation Options Report*, which is released at each request for information (RFI) and at Phase 1 Final Dispositions and is found within the Application Cycle subtab of the My ACOs tab in ACO-MS. All changes made to the ACO Participant List are effective at the start of the next performance year.

Published Resources Available



- [Application Types & Timelines webpage](#)
- [Key Change Request Cycle Actions & Deadlines](#)
- [ACO Participant List and Participant Agreement Guidance](#)
- [ACO Participant List Change Requests in ACO-MS](#) tip sheet

5 SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver and SNF Affiliate List

During the annual change request cycle, ACOs currently participating in or transitioning to a two-sided risk model (Levels C, D, or E of the BASIC track, or the ENHANCED track) may apply for a SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver, and ACOs with an existing SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver may modify their SNF Affiliate List.

To apply for a SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver, ACOs must complete a separate application during Phase 1. ACOs wishing to apply for a new SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver can do so from the Agreement Details subtab.

1. Click on the Agreement Details subtab and navigate to the SNF/BIP Information box.
2. Click on the "Add SNF/BIP" box.

3. Click “Yes” under the corresponding SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver question to elect to submit a SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver application. The deadline to make this selection is the Phase 1 RFI-1 deadline.

ACOs who are in a one-sided level of the BASIC track must submit a Participation Options change request to voluntarily move to a two-sided level of risk/reward in the BASIC track before initiating an application for a SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver.

For ACOs with an existing SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver, all approved change requests to add a SNF affiliate to the SNF Affiliate List are effective at the start of the next performance year, which begins on January 1st.

Published Resources Available



- [SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver Guidance](#)
- [SNF Affiliate Change Request in ACO-MS](#) tip sheet

6 Beneficiary Incentive Program (BIP)

During the annual change request cycle, ACOs currently participating in or transitioning to a two-sided risk model (Levels C, D, or E of the BASIC track, or the ENHANCED track) may apply to operate a BIP. To apply for a BIP, ACOs must complete a separate BIP application during Phase 2. CMS highly recommends interested ACOs review the Questions and Answers section of the BIP Guidance prior to applying for an overview of the program and its requirements.

ACOs wishing to apply for a new BIP can do so from the Agreement Details subtab.

1. Click on the Agreement Details subtab and navigate to the SNF/BIP Information box.
2. Click on the “Add SNF/BIP” box.
3. Click “Yes” under the corresponding BIP question to elect to submit a BIP application. The deadline to make this selection is the Phase 2 deadline.

ACOs who are in a one-sided level of the BASIC track must submit a Participation Options change request to voluntarily move to a two-sided level of risk/reward in the BASIC track before initiating an application for a BIP.

Published Resources Available



- [Beneficiary Incentive Program Guidance](#)
- [Beneficiary Incentive Program Application](#)

7 Respond to Requests for Information (RFIs)

ACOs will receive an opportunity to correct deficiencies and/or make updates or modifications to the ACO's change request(s) during two rounds of RFI submission periods in Phase 1 and one RFI period in Phase 2. RFIs allow ACOs the opportunity to correct deficiencies and/or make updates or modifications to their change request(s) or applications. RFIs are issued in ACO-MS, and ACOs must respond to RFIs in ACO-MS.

7.1 RFI TYPES AND AVAILABLE ACTIONS

There are several possible RFI types during Phase 1. These will appear as separate tasks in the ACO dashboard.

- Change requests for ACO participants
- SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver application and change requests for SNF affiliates
- Participation Options change requests
- Repayment Mechanism

7.1.1 Phase 1 RFI-1 Important Information

- Last opportunity to **add** an ACO participant or SNF affiliate
- Last opportunity to make the election to add a SNF 3-Day Rule Waiver

7.1.2 Phase 1 RFI-2 Important Information

- Last opportunity to **withdraw** or **delete** an ACO participant
- Last opportunity to **withdraw** a SNF affiliate change request
- Last opportunity to submit a Participation Options change request

7.1.3 Phase 2 RFI Important Information

- Only opportunity to make updates to BIP application

7.2 PARTICIPATION OPTIONS REPORT

CMS provides all ACOs with a *Participation Options Report* with the release of each Phase 1 RFI and at Phase 1 Final Dispositions that is applicable for the upcoming performance year. ACOs should review this report to understand program participation eligibility. This report is also designed to help ACOs evaluate future participation options. ACOs should review this report to understand how continued program eligibility may change as a result of change request submissions.

Currently participating ACOs will receive an updated *Participation Options Report* even if no actions are taken during the change request cycle.

The *Participation Options Report* is released via ACO-MS at the beginning of each Phase 1 RFI submission window and at Phase 1 Final Dispositions. The report is available for download in the Reporting tab of ACO-MS, and key summary information can be found in the Application

Cycle subtab of the My ACOs tab. Additional information can be found via the data dictionary that will be available via an information bubble in both the Application Cycle subtab and the Reporting tab.

The following tabs of the report include information **relevant** for currently participating ACOs:

40% RISK CHECK

Provides ACOs with information on whether the ACO meets the definition of experienced or inexperienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives (defined at [42 CFR § 425.20](#)) based on the latest version of the proposed ACO Participant List for the upcoming performance year.

Tips for Success



ACOs participating in a one-sided model, including ACOs receiving advance investment payments, should pay close attention to the 40% Risk Check tab for compliance monitoring purposes. The *Participation Options Report* will indicate if an ACO becomes experienced with performance-based risk as a result of modifications to their ACO Participant List.

If CMS determines that an ACO in a one-sided model is experienced with performance-based risk, CMS will contact the ACO with a compliance action. More information can be found in the Monitoring of ACOs Inexperienced with Performance-Based Risk section below.

REVENUE – REPAYMENT MECHANISM

Provides information about estimated and final repayment mechanism amounts for currently participating ACOs establishing a new repayment mechanism when transitioning from a one-sided risk model to a two-sided risk model.

The tab also provides the high and low revenue determination.

Tips for Success



An ACO that is receiving advance investment payments and will be entering the second year of its initial agreement period in the upcoming performance year must maintain its status as a low-revenue ACO to continue receiving advance investment payments. Refer to the [Advance Investment Payments Guidance](#) for additional information.

Tips for Success



For a currently participating ACO in a two-sided model within an agreement period, this tab provides information that the ACO can use to predict whether an increase to the ACO's existing repayment mechanism may be required because the recalculated amount (based on the proposed ACO Participant List for the next performance year) is more than \$1 million higher than the existing amount ([42 CFR § 425.204\(f\)\(4\)\(iii\)](#)). However, this calculation is not performed and finalized until after the application and change request cycle is completed. If an increase to the ACO's existing repayment mechanism amount is required, CMS will notify the ACO after the annual change request cycle is complete. ACOs have no required action to increase their existing repayment mechanism amount unless or until CMS contacts them.

BENEFICIARY ASSIGNMENT ESTIMATE

Provides ACOs with assigned beneficiary estimates for the upcoming performance year at the ACO level and the individual ACO participant TIN level. In the RFI versions of the report, rows for proposed and currently participating ACO participant TINs and rows at the ACO level, which summarize beneficiary-level estimates across all TINs, will be displayed. Values in the ACO-level rows reflect ACO participants after accounting for all deficiencies (deficiency information is provided for all ACO participants). More information can be found in the data dictionary, via an information bubble within both the Application Cycle subtab and the Reporting tab.

Tips for Success



ACOs are strongly encouraged to monitor the estimated number of assigned beneficiaries for the upcoming performance year, especially if the estimate is close to 5,000.

AIP ESTIMATE

Provides ACO participant TIN-level and ACO-level information related to AIP. An ACO that is receiving advance investment payments and will be entering the second year of its agreement period in the upcoming performance year will receive updated quarterly advance investment payment estimates reflecting any changes made to the ACO Participant List and/or the ACO's assigned beneficiary population.

Additionally, the AIP Estimate tab provides all currently participating ACOs (including those not participating in AIP) with information on the proportions of the ACO's assigned beneficiary population that are (a) enrolled in the Medicare Part D Low Income Subsidy (LIS) or dually

eligible for Medicare or Medicaid, or (b) residing in a census block group with an Area Deprivation Index (ADI) national percentile rank of at least 85..

PREPAID SHARED SAVINGS ESTIMATE

Provides ACO participants TIN-level and ACO-level information related to Prepaid Shared Savings (PSS). The PSS Estimate tab provides all currently participating ACOs (including those not participating in PSS) with information on their eligibility to receive prepaid shared savings and an estimate of prepaid shared savings that the ACO would be expected to earn in the next performance year.

ACOs can find additional information about the PSS eligibility and estimate information in the *Participation Options Report Data Dictionary*, located in both the Application Cycle subtab (via the information bubble) of the My ACOs tab and the Program Resources section of the Knowledge Library tab in [ACO-MS](#).

ACO SUMMARY

Combines information presented in other tabs to summarize an ACO's participation options and program eligibility.

Key fields for currently participating ACOs include:

Currently Participating ACO Cohort	ACO Summary Tab Field(s)
All one-sided risk model ACOs	Estimated Prior Risk Participation Experienced with Risk Action Needed to Address Track/Level Eligibility
ACOs receiving advance investment payments	Revenue Percentage High/Low Revenue Eligible for AIP Based on Most Recent Eligibility Checks Estimated Quarterly Advance Investment Payment
ACOs transitioning from a one-sided to two-sided risk model	Repayment Mechanism Amount Repayment Mechanism Amount Action Required
All ACOs	Beneficiary Assignment Estimates

8 BASIC Track Glide Path Eligibility Across Agreement Periods

A currently participating ACO's eligibility to maintain participation in the BASIC track's glide path is determined by whether the ACO is and remains inexperienced with performance-based risk and the ACO's history of participation in the BASIC track ([42 CFR § 425.600\(g\)](#)).

The table below provides additional details about the participation options and eligibility criteria for a currently participating ACO participating in Level A or B.

	BASIC Track Participation History	Participation Options	
		Next Agreement Period	Future Agreement Periods
Inexperienced – BASIC track Level A or B	Currently in first agreement period in BASIC track	A, B, C, D, E	Remain in Level E or move to ENHANCED track
Inexperienced – BASIC track Level A or B	Currently in second agreement period in BASIC track	Move to Level E or ENHANCED track	Remain in or move to Level E/ENHANCED track

For the purpose of determining an ACO's participation history in the BASIC track, an ACO that **enters** an agreement under the BASIC track's glide path at either Level A or Level B is deemed to have **completed** a BASIC track glide path agreement period. Refer to the two examples below:

Example 1

An ACO that began an agreement period as a new legal entity (no prior Shared Savings Program participation), participated in Level A of the BASIC track, and then subsequently decided to early renew at the completion of their first performance year would be eligible to participate in the BASIC track's glide path for a second agreement period. This hypothetical ACO is represented in the first row in the table above.

Example 2

An ACO that began an agreement period as a new legal entity (no prior Shared Savings Program participation), participated in Level A of the BASIC track, and then subsequently decided to early-renew at the completion of their first performance year would be able to participate in the BASIC track glide path during the second agreement period. If the ACO submits another early renewal application during that first performance year of their second agreement period (participating in Level A), the ACO would **not** be eligible to participate in the BASIC track's glide path for a third agreement period, despite still being inexperienced with performance-based risk. The ACO would be required to participate in either Level E of the BASIC track or the ENHANCED track. This hypothetical ACO is represented in the second row in the table above.

Although an ACO may have participated in a one-sided track of the Shared Savings Program in an agreement period that began prior to July 1, 2019, those prior participation agreement periods do not impact the determination of an ACO's eligibility to participate in the BASIC track's glide path. Prior participation in the former Shared Savings Program tracks (Tracks 1, 2, and 3 and the Track 1+ Model) impact whether the ACO is experienced with performance-based risk, which impacts the ACO's eligibility for participation in the BASIC track. However, the determination of the **number** of BASIC track agreement periods for which an ACO is eligible only includes agreement periods starting on or after July 1, 2019. Earlier agreement periods where ACOs participated in Tracks 1, 2, and 3 and the Track 1+ Model are not reflected in this determination. Refer to the example below:

Example 3

An ACO participating in Level A or B and that previously participated as a Track 1 ACO in one or more agreement periods that began prior to July 1, 2019, would be able to participate in the BASIC track glide path for one additional agreement period because the Track 1 participation would not impact the ACO's eligibility to participate in the BASIC track for a second agreement period. Similarly, if a re-entering ACO is determined to have previously participated as a Track 1 ACO, the prior ACO's participation in Track 1 does not impact the re-entering ACO's eligibility to participate in the BASIC track's glide path for a second agreement period. Similar to the ACO in Example 1 above, these hypothetical ACOs are also represented in the first row in the table above.

A currently participating ACO that becomes experienced with performance-based risk may not participate in a one-sided level.

9 Monitoring of ACO's Experience with Performance-Based Risk

Pursuant to [42 CFR § 425.600\(h\)\(1\)](#), ACOs that are inexperienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives and participating in Level A or B of the BASIC track are subject to monitoring by CMS to determine whether changes to their certified list of ACO participants cause the ACO to be considered experienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives and therefore ineligible for participation in a one-sided model. Pursuant to [42 CFR § 425.600\(h\)\(2\)\(i\)](#), if the ACO meets the definition of experienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives, the ACO would be permitted to complete the performance year in which it met the definition of experienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives in a one-sided model of the BASIC track, but would be ineligible to continue participation in the one-sided model after the end of that performance year if the ACO continues to meet the definition of experienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives.

An ACO should carefully consider how changes to their ACO Participant List may affect their participation options. As an example, consider an ACO that began an agreement period in Level A of the BASIC track. During their first performance year's Change Request Cycle, the ACO could have elected to automatically advance along the glide path (to Level B) or elected to maintain participation in Level A for the remainder of the ACO's agreement period. If the changes made to the ACO Participant List for Performance Year (PY) 2 cause the ACO to be experienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives for PY 2, the ACO will be allowed to continue in a one-sided model for PY 2 but will automatically advance to Level E of the BASIC track for PY 3, unless the ACO was determined to be inexperienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives based on the ACO Participant List submitted during the Change Request Cycle leading up to PY 3.

Additionally, if the ACO in the example above had elected to maintain participation in Level A for the remainder of the ACO's agreement period but was determined to be experienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives in a later performance year, the ACO would be subject to the monitoring described in this section.

Refer to the table below for an illustration of this hypothetical example.

Performance Year	Risk Experience Determination	BASIC Track Level
PY1	Inexperienced	ACO participates in Level A.
PY2	Experienced	ACO is allowed to elect to maintain participation in Level A or glide to Level B despite the risk experience determination.
PY3	Inexperienced	ACO is allowed to maintain participation in Level A or glide to Level C because the ACO is now inexperienced with risk.
	Experienced	ACO is automatically advanced to Level E because the ACO remains experienced with risk.

Tips for Success



During the annual change request cycle RFI rounds, ACOs will receive information on their track eligibility and any action needed to address all eligibility concerns via the *Participation Options Report* and the Application cycle subtab in ACO-MS.