

Document Review

Allotting Sufficient Time for Objective Evidence Collection

Drafting a schedule for an appraisal can be a difficult balancing act. Appraisal Sponsors are typically motivated to keep Phase 2 of the appraisal as short as possible to reduce costs, while an Appraisal Team Leader (ATL) would often prefer to dedicate more time to assure that the team is gathering a representative data set upon which to base practice characterizations and goal ratings. While the desire to keep costs down is certainly understandable, it is vital to the long-term success of the Appraised Organization that the team's findings be as accurate as possible. To that end, it is important that an appraisal schedule has a practical and realistic allotment of time dedicated to document review.

The amount of time sufficient to review artifacts during an appraisal can vary due to numerous factors. The number of process areas (PAs) and processes to be covered, the number of projects in the organizational scope, the number of team members on the appraisal, etc., can all affect the time frame required to properly perform document review. A Maturity Level 3 Benchmark Appraisal covering four projects may likely require 20 to 30 hours of artifact review time, whereas a one-project Maturity Level 2 Benchmark Appraisal may require less than 10 hours. Quality Management understands that this is often a judgment call, but experience and lessons learned from previous appraisals should be considered. When Quality Management finds an onsite schedule with a seemingly inadequate amount of time budgeted for this activity, the issue is flagged during quality review for further discussion with the ATL. For example, if the appraisal is targeting Maturity Level 5 for six projects, an allotted time of five hours of evidence review would not be sufficient, so that may lead to audit or further discussion with Quality Management. That discussion would be used to attain a better understanding of how sufficient coverage was reached in such a condensed time frame.

A common technique for reducing onsite time is to begin artifact review during a readiness review. This is an acceptable appraisal tailoring option. However, if the appraisal team evaluates the content of artifacts to determine how that content supports model practice implementation, they have begun Phase 2 (Conduct Appraisal). Please also note that practice characterization does not have to take place for the Phase 2 start to occur; the team needs only to move from inventorying objective evidence to evaluating any of its content. If an ATL chooses to conduct their document review in this way, it is important that the appraisal plan reflects that strategy in a detailed and transparent manner. In addition, the CMMI Appraisal System (CAS) record should identify the date this review began as the Phase 2 start date.

Another technique that can be used is a combination of document review and interviews. In such a scenario, the team will review documents while being present with interviewees to simultaneously confirm the validity of both affirmations and artifacts. However, this typically also means that interview time may need to be extended to cover everything in scope. When

employing this tactic, it is once again important that the appraisal plan document in detail how artifacts will be reviewed and how the team will prepare for this data collection approach.

Questions regarding this Quality Tip can be sent to quality@cmmiinstitute.com.