Appraisal Findings
Creating and Delivering Final Findings for Appraised Organizations

Findings from a CMMI appraisal deliver actionable feedback for an organization through which to improve. Accordingly, the CMMI Appraisal Method Definition Document (MDD) establishes standards for the creation and delivery of appraisal findings to ensure that appraisal findings are delivered in a way that is standardized and valuable to the appraised organization. The MDD, therefore, is an important source of guidance for appraisal teams as they draft final findings presentations during an appraisal. However, during audits and appraisal reviews, Quality Management has observed instances wherein Appraisal Team Leaders (ATLs) have not consistently followed MDD Final Findings requirements. The aim of this Quality Tip is to help the CMMI Lead Appraiser community understand how to follow MDD guidelines for writing and delivering Final Findings to an appraised organization.

Appraisal Final Findings are required to be delivered to an appraised organization, and each finding must be categorized according to the MDD-approved categories listed in *MDD 2.2.2 Generate Preliminary Findings*. ATLs must use the MDD definitions for these categories as well and may not redefine these categories or miscategorize findings. Strengths and Weaknesses, as defined by the MDD, must be included in the Final Findings if they are present within the Organizational Unit (OU). Optional categories (i.e., Notes, Improvement Opportunities, Improvements in Progress, and Recommendations/Next Steps as defined by the MDD), may be included as applicable.

Per the MDD Glossary, weaknesses are defined as "an ineffective, or lack of, implementation of one or more processes that meet the intent and value of a practice based on verified objective evidence, and applicable across the project(s) and Organizational Support Functions (OSFs) or Organizational Unit as a whole." Weaknesses must be included and labeled accordingly if they are present within an OU. While it is theoretically possible for an OU to have no weaknesses present, especially an OU that has very mature CMMI processes and has gone through multiple appraisals, this scenario is very rare. However, during audits and appraisal reviews, Quality Management has found that some ATLs frequently report no weaknesses in their appraisals. In some scenarios, Quality Management discovered that the ATLs were miscategorizing weaknesses as "improvement opportunities," in violation of the MDD guidelines. Disguising, miscategorizing, or downplaying weaknesses is not in the OU's best interest as these are critical points of focus that can be used to achieve better results in the future.

Strengths are defined by the MDD as an "exemplary or noteworthy implementation of a process that meets the intent and value of a CMMI model practice", and these findings must also be included if present in the OU. However, some ATLs have been observed to include gratuitous strengths in appraisal findings which are expressly forbidden per *MDD Section 2.1.4 Verify OE and Record Gaps*. Gratuitous strengths are findings that are labeled as strengths but are merely instances where the implemented processes simply meet the intent and value of a model practice.

Optionally, ATLs may include Notes, Improvement Opportunities, Improvements in Progress, and/or Recommendations/Next Steps based on the MDD definitions of each of these categories. Additional categories created by the ATL and the ATL's own interpretations or definitions of findings categories are not permitted to be included and will be flagged by Quality Management during appraisal reviews. This is done in part to ensure consistency across appraisal deliveries.

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