

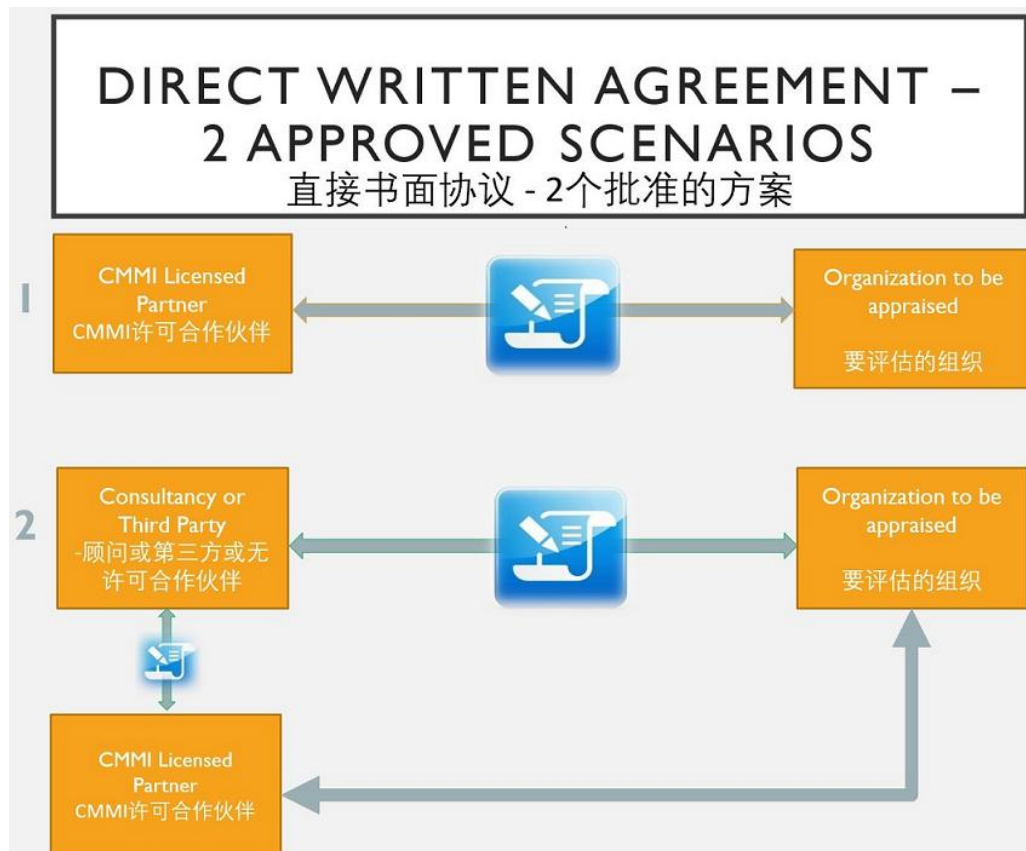
Working with Consultancies

Expectations and Responsibilities

A Certified CMMI Lead Appraiser (LA) will sometimes find and secure an appraisal opportunity through a consulting organization that has helped its client adopt CMMI best practices. It is important to remember that the involvement of a consultancy does not reduce or bypass the responsibilities of the LA during the planning and delivery of an appraisal and, given that consultancies do not have a direct relationship with or oversight from CMMI Institute, additional measures may be needed to verify the legitimacy of the services provided.

Contracting with a Consultancy

First, the LA must consider the appraisal contract. The LA must ensure that the CMMI Partner sponsoring the appraisal delivery has a direct written agreement with the appraised organization—***the Partner cannot be contracted solely through a consultancy***. The consultancy cannot exclusively have an agreement for the appraisal and then act as an intermediary between the Partner and the company being appraised as this would present an unavoidable conflict of interest. If entering into a contract with a consulting organization, the Partner must also sign a separate contract with the appraised organization as shown below:



Appraisal Planning

Once an appraisal has been agreed upon and endorsed by all parties, a consultancy may participate in Phase 1 of an appraisal (Plan and Prepare for Appraisal). Since a consultancy would have a history with the company to be appraised, it often provides the initial input for the appraisal plan. Details such as an overview of the organization, names of potential Appraisal Team Members (ATMs), information about the Appraisal Sponsor, and dates for Phase 2 (Conduct Appraisal) may be given to the LA by a consultant. The LA may then use this information to draft the initial appraisal plan.

However, while a consultant can provide the initial input, the CMMI Method Definition Document (MDD) requires that an Appraisal Team Leader (ATL) meet with the Appraisal Sponsor directly to gather further essential information for the plan and to establish a firm understanding of the Organizational Unit (OU) to be appraised. Interaction with the Sponsor not only is required but also is integral to developing the appraisal plan and establishing the appraisal objectives. This interaction cannot be delegated to a consultancy.

Team Member Selection

LAs may elect to include one or more employees of the consultancy on the appraisal team. This, of course, carries risk. Since the consultancy has an inherent investment in its client achieving the targeted maturity level, a conflict of interest can be created that may not be able to be properly mitigated. When choosing an appraisal team, therefore, the ATL is responsible for interviewing potential ATMs, working to mitigate the risks associated with each ATM who is selected. All such information, including the ATMs, their potential conflict of interest, and the risk mitigations for each, must be thoroughly documented in the appraisal plan. Additionally, the ATL must verify the identities, qualifications, and backgrounds of all ATMs, appraisal participants including Organizational Unit Coordinators (OUCs) and Appraisal Sponsors, and Registered Interpreters personally, without relying on information provided from a consultancy.

Interpretation Services

When an appraisal requires the services of an interpreter, including Registered Interpreters, to facilitate interviews, consultancies sometimes encourage the use of an “in-house” interpreter who works for the consulting organization itself. Like a consultancy’s employee serving as an ATM, the use of an in-house interpreter also creates a serious conflict of interest. The consultancy is given an opportunity to manage critical data before it reaches the ATL. Even if not instructed to do so by their employer, human nature may lead an interpreter to manipulate the interviewees’ answers in the interest of attaining a favorable result for their organization. Accordingly, CMMI Institute strongly recommends that ATLs use interpreters who either work for a third-party company or their own CMMI Partner. The ATL also should take steps to verify

the legitimacy of interpretation services being provided by using translation software or other means of interpretation.

Verification of Institutionalization

When appraising an OU, it is vital to go beyond simply looking for compliance with the referenced model; the appraisal team must ensure institutionalization as well. A consultant may work with an organization to create their processes, but that alone is not sufficient for an OU to achieve the targeted maturity level. The company must apply the model's practices within the context of its business. The duty of the ATL and their appraisal team is to locate evidence that confirms that the OU's employees have institutionalized the processes, i.e., the processes are performed in a constant and reliable manner. When an LA submits their appraisal record to CMMI Institute for review, CMMI Institute expects that the record reflects the work of the reporting LA. Therefore, it is reviewed as if the appraisal and all its contents were the work of the LA; thus, the LA and their sponsoring CMMI Partner are responsible for verifying their own work and are accountable for the appraisal outcome including guaranteeing the legitimacy of objective evidence (OE) provided.

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