



CMMI® Certification – Benchmark Appraisal Observation Policy

Purpose

This policy details the minimum requirements for a CMMI® Benchmark Appraisal Observation.

Scope and Applicability

All Candidate CMMI Lead Appraisers (LAs) are subject to the requirements of this policy, and CMMI Partners are responsible for verifying that the status and certifications of each Candidate sponsored under their agreement meet all CMMI Appraisal Method Definition Document (MDD) and policy requirements. This includes verification that the Candidate satisfies all observation requirements. This policy applies to all CMMI Benchmark Appraisal observations.

The MDD is the authoritative source for all appraisal requirements and must be used, followed, and adhered to for all registered appraisals. CMMI Institute appoints an approved CMMI-credentialed Observer (herein referred to as "Observer"). Candidates may not request specific Observers.

Background

As the final step in the certification process, an observation is intended to provide a uniform level of mentoring and confirmation of MDD understanding and application for Candidate LAs. The goal of this mentoring is to ensure the Candidate's smooth transition to the role of Appraisal Team Leader (ATL). The policies established by CMMI Institute regarding observed appraisals are designed to facilitate a valid, useful, and effective appraisal planning, delivery, and mentorship opportunity.

Implementation Detail

The Observer evaluates the Candidate LA on the following criteria during the appraisal activities. Process context details such as organization size, the size and duration of typical projects, lifecycles in use, and business practices of the appraised organization could potentially lead to additional scoping considerations above the criteria detailed below.

CMMI Institute may cancel a scheduled observation if any one of the items listed in this policy is not accomplished.

- **Observed Appraisal:**

- Must be a Benchmark Appraisal; the observed appraisal cannot be a Sustainment or Evaluation Appraisal or eligible for Action Plan Reappraisal (APR).
 - Must appraise up to two CMMI Benchmark Model domains and only one Organizational Unit (OU). More than two domains may be considered, but the Candidate must receive written approval by CMMI Institute after submitting a detailed plan for managing the appraisal with the inclusion of additional domains beyond two. The Candidate LA must not belong to the appraised Organization unless approval is granted by CMMI Institute. The Candidate LA must not belong to the appraised OU and must not have been involved in the creation or use of the OU's appraised processes. All risks and Conflicts of Interest (COIs) must be thoroughly documented in the appraisal plan.
 - The appraisal record must not be set up in the CMMI Appraisal System (CAS) until an Observer is identified and the observation is confirmed.
 - The Observer must attend an Observer Orientation and Expectations session and follows the requirements and criteria for the observation as detailed with the Certification-Observation Package. The Candidate is provided with an Observation Guide that includes information regarding the observation responsibilities, required observed activities, and the observation evaluation.
 - The appraisal record must be set up in accordance with all requirements of the *CMMI Appraisal System Usage Policy (PA010)*.
 - The appraisal must include a minimum of five days for Phase 2.
 - The model scope:
 - Must target Maturity Level 3 for at least one domain, additional domains may be added beyond minimum requirements. More than two domains requires written approval by CMMI Institute.
 - Must include all applicable PGL2-3 practices for all in-scope PAs
 - May include additional PAs (Capability Levels) beyond the minimum requirements.
 - Must include submission of the draft appraisal plan to the Observer at least 30 days prior to the start of Phase 2.
 - Must include a Sponsor Role and Responsibilities Acceptance Form and an appraisal feedback form completed and submitted by the Appraisal Sponsor.
 - Must be reported and submitted through CAS within 30 days after the appraisal delivery.
 - Must meet all applicable MDD and policy requirements.
- **Organizational Scope:**
 - For Development appraisals, must include at least two projects and one organizational support function (OSF) with Objective Evidence (OE) for every practice in every PA in scope, and across the entire applicable development lifecycle processes and activities.
 - For Services appraisals, must include at least one project and one OSF with OE for every practice in every PA in scope, and across the entire applicable services processes and activities. If only one project is included, that project must incorporate at least two services, e.g., one main service and one sub-service, as per the service catalog.

- For any other in-scope domains, the scope must include at least one project and one OSF with OE for every practice in every domain-specific PA in scope, and across the entire applicable set of processes demonstrating and producing OE for each domain in scope.
- Must be broad enough to require at least 12 interview participants if the OU has more than 50 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs); at least seven interview participants are required if the OU has fewer than 50 FTEs.
- **Appraisal Team Composition:** The Observer must be listed in the CAS appraisal record but is not considered a member of the appraisal team.
- **Interpreters:** If an interpreter is required, the Candidate's organization is responsible for obtaining and paying for a qualified interpreter, with the interpreter being approved by the Observer. This includes appraisals subject to the use of CMMI Institute-approved Registered Interpreters.
- **Appraisal Sponsor:** Should not be in the management reporting chain of the Candidate LA.
- **Candidate LA:** Should not have significant COIs relating to the appraisal.
- **Security:** If the appraisal is delivered at a sensitive compartmented information facility (SCIF), the Candidate is responsible for obtaining the appropriate entry documents or authorization for the Observer.
- **Organizational Evidence Review:** Observers may request to view organizational documents to assess a candidate's interpretation of a PA. CMMI Institute's agreements and the Code of Professional Conduct (COPC) hold Observers accountable to rigid confidentiality guidelines. If the organization is unwilling to allow the Observer to view evidence to affirm the Candidate's interpretation of a PA, an observation cannot be performed.

Following an observation, a Candidate LA can then be recommended to become a Certified CMMI Lead Appraiser.

- **Certification Validity Period:** To complete the certification process:
 - Candidates must ensure that all appraisal feedback forms are submitted by Appraisal Team Members (ATMs) and the Appraisal Sponsor.
 - Candidates must submit the appraisal for review; it must be processed and accepted by CMMI Institute.
 - The CMMI Partner must pay all observation fees.
 - The Candidate must successfully complete the observation and be recommended for certification by the Observer.
 - If eligible, Candidates must complete any remediation activities prescribed by CMMI Institute. CMMI Institute reviews and must approve of remediation prior to certification.
 - Quality Management must review and approve of the final observation report prior to becoming certified; The three-year certification validity period begins when all above items have been completed.
- **Policies and Requirements:** Certification as a CMMI LA requires compliance with CMMI Institute's policies. LAs are also expected to comply with the COPC, the MDD, the Partner Guide, and the Certification Agreement. LAs must understand and adhere to these requirements throughout the tenure of their certifications.

- **Certification Renewal:** Certification as a CMMI Certified LA includes a commitment to ongoing professional development to maintain a high level of proficiency in the practice. Candidate LAs must review the *Partner-Sponsored Renewal Policy (PC003)* for reference and guidance regarding the activities required to maintain certification.

Additional References

- Questions regarding this policy should be submitted via support.isaca.org
- Published policies are available at [cmmiinstitute.com](https://cmmiinstitute.com/partners/policies) on the policy page:
<https://cmmiinstitute.com/partners/policies>

Revision History

Version Number	Date Published	Date Effective	Changes
V3.1	14 July 2025	4 April 2024	Updated with CMMI Institute branding; removed options and specified scope of Maturity Level 3 is required
V3.0	4 April 2024	4 April 2024	Updated for CMMI V3.0 observation pathway.
V2.4	24 February 2023	01 January 2019	Updated Organizational Scope information within Implementation Detail section. Minor edits throughout for consistency with CMMI branding.
V2.3	26 October 2021	01 January 2019	Removed outdated references and information; updated to align with current observation process; updated format, structure, and corrected minor typographical and grammatical errors.
V2.2	17 January 2020	01 January 2019	Policy number changed from PA010 to PC005; minor clarifications throughout
V2.1	17 October 2019	01 January 2019	Updated format & structure, policy number changed from 0018-R to PA010; minor clarifications throughout
V2.0	01 January 2019	01 January 2019	Updated
V1.0	02 September 2015	02 September 2015	Initial release