

Appraisal Teams

Selecting Qualified Appraisal Team Members

An appraisal is only as strong as the team that performs it. Finding and assembling a capable team is critical to a Lead Appraiser's (LA's) ability to deliver an appraisal that achieves accurate, actionable results. Quality reviews of appraisals have occasionally identified teams that have fallen short of the requirements defined by the CMMI Appraisal Method Definition Document (MDD). It is the LA's responsibility to ensure that their team is compliant with the MDD; LAs are cautioned to exercise due diligence when selecting Appraisal Team Members (ATMs).

Quality Management has noticed an emerging trend of inadequate screening of team members prior to selection. When an LA does not sufficiently examine background information, there is a high risk of an underqualified person being selected which in turn risks the validity of the appraisal itself. Potential ATMs should be able to provide valid photo identification and résumés (CVs) that reflect relevant training and experience.

In addition, it is advised that LAs scrutinize the details provided regarding an ATM's background when they do not seem accurate. In an audited appraisal, ATMs had been provided by the consultancy working with the appraised organization. Upon meeting them, though, the auditor noted that most of these ATMs were very young and not likely to have the combined field experience of over 25 years that they had reported to the LA. Ideally, this would have been caught by the LA prior to the start of Phase 2 (Conduct Appraisal).

There have also been times when the team's lack of experience has been plainly stated in the appraisal plan. Quality Management has found plans that provide numbers that don't meet the minimum requirements for domain and/or management experience. Thankfully, this is often a typographical error; for example, the LA may have typed "1" instead of "11" in the domain experience column.

In a few instances, however, the LA has explained that the insufficient team experience is a result of a more experienced ATM leaving the appraisal due to an emergency or other unforeseen circumstance. For this reason, every effort should be made to identify backup team members during planning to ensure that the sudden departure of a selected ATM does not jeopardize the team's legitimacy. If the backup ATMs do not have enough experience to bring the team into compliance with the MDD, the appraisal should be postponed until a qualified team can be assembled.

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