

Self-Assessment in the Workforce Development Organization

v. 2002 - Pilot Version

Customized for Workforce Development Organizations, by the US Department of Labor

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Years ago, the experts proclaimed that organizational success was dependent on compliance to procedures and specifications. That if an organization followed all the written procedures “to the letter” and if its product or service met all the requirements, success would follow. It didn’t work, and the road to **organizational oblivion** became littered with the skeletons of organizations that concentrated solely on meeting the requirements of the day. The **decline in dominance** of the US steel industry, Detroit auto makers, American TV manufacturers, and countless others gives testimony to the fact that compliance with rules is simply not enough. This is the “hidden message” behind the Workforce Investment Act.

Today workforce development organizations face challenges every bit as tough as any of the industries mentioned above. Any workforce organization that believes it can survive by simply following procedures and doing business as usual is very likely to end up as another skeleton alongside the roadway. What today’s successful private sector organizations have realized – and what other organizations which would be successful are learning – is that organizational success is measured only by **excellent results** and **satisfied customers**, and that this does not just happen by chance.

John Leslie: *Implementing the Workforce Investment Act Continuous Improvement in Workforce Development Programs.* 7/1999.

This tool will make a difference for any workforce development agency: large or small. Be it a Workforce Investment Board, One-Stop Career Center, Service Provider, State Agency, Community College, Award-Winner or a Struggling Performer.

Remember, this is built on what works – on what has worked for workforce development organizations just like yours for seven years. Organizations that have used this tool and its predecessors have reported five general benefits.

The tool has helped to:

- ❑ **Develop a plan for the future**
Know where improvements can be made and how to make them
- ❑ **Build community support**
Demonstrate quality, business-like rigor, and results
- ❑ **Empower the workforce**
Focus the system around empowered teams
- ❑ **Increase energy, commitment and passion**
Invigorate and energize the entire staff
- ❑ **Track progress over time**
See growth and improvement through easy-to-use tracking systems

If it's not up to chance . . .

If you are not going to leave things to chance, what are your options? What is there to do?

For many, it begins with a commitment to being a high-performing, continuously improving organization. Today, more and more public sector organizations have followed the lead of the world's most successful businesses. Some of the most successful workforce development agencies in the country have started down the road to continuous improvement.

Organizations that consistently get beyond the expected in delivering services have several common traits:

- They always put the customer first
- They evaluate how things are done on a regular basis
- They believe in and invest in their staff
- They promote the agency vision

If you are struggling to understand your value in the customer service areas, ask yourself these questions:

- What value do I add to my organization's products and services?
- Who do I support internally?
- If I miss a deadline, what impact does it have?
- If I don't see the customer, do they see the results of my work?
- How do I want my customers to think about me?
- How can I consistently find out about what my customers want?

There are three sections to the assessment. Each one is designed to build on the other.

1. Getting Grounded (app.1 hour): This short exercise involves learning about and understanding key basic concepts and information about your organization: Customers, Products and Services, Internal Processes, Partners and Suppliers, Stakeholders, Mission, Vision and Values.
2. Seven Dimensions (app. 4 – 6 hours): This exercise involves answering and scoring questions and brainstorming strengths and opportunities for each dimension: Leadership, Customer Focus, Strategic Planning, Information and Analysis, Process Management, Human Resources, Business Results.
3. Action Planning (app.1-2 hours): This exercise involves grouping and summarizing opportunities and committing assigned individuals and teams to specific, doable actions (with timeframes).

Getting Grounded

Before you begin, it is important to be grounded in some basic concepts. Have an open conversation about each of these questions – you may want to brainstorm. This is not about getting the *right* answer. Rather, it is about building an understanding of your organization.

For many organizations, the answers are obvious. For others, they are not. Spend as much time as you need to build this foundation. Generally, it will take no more than one hour to do a complete job. *Record your answers on the next page. You will be drawing from your answers to the following questions throughout the self-assessment.*

1. Who benefits from the things you do? What individuals or groups are affected in some way? *These are your customers: job seekers and businesses.*
2. What are the things you do, and the things you provide to your customers? *These are your products and services.*
3. What things do you do that customers do not see? *These are your internal processes.*
4. Who helps you make service, products or processes happen? Who provides material, support, technology, staffing, and so on? *These are your partners and suppliers.*
5. Who else benefits - financially or in some other way - from your services, products or processes? Who is positively or negatively affected? *These individuals, groups and communities are your stakeholders.*
6. What are your mission, vision, values and goals?

Getting Grounded Answers:

1. Our Customers:

2. Our Products and Services:

3. Our Internal Processes:

4. Our Partners and Suppliers:

5. Our Stakeholders:

6. Our Mission, Vision and Values:

The Seven Dimensions

Within each of the Seven Dimensions, all you need to follow are these three simple steps...

Step 1, Answering the Questions

This exercise involves developing a shared understanding of how your organization works. In simple terms the team should be able to answer: *What is done? Who does it? How often? How well? What methods are used? What measures are used? How well is it documented? How extensively is it understood? How frequently is it used throughout the organization? What results are achieved?* It is about creating an understanding of what your world is like today - you will not all have the same experiences, but you can understand each other's perspectives. Ask yourselves *what works really well and what has not been successful?*

We've found that it helps to record individual answers onto two flipcharts; one entitled "Strengths" and the other "Opportunities" during this particular phase of the Self-Assessment. Having the information summarized and visible, helps to make the scoring phase easier. "Strengths" are the things that you do well, that serve your purpose and your customers. "Opportunities" can take many forms. They can be areas that are not serving your purpose or customers, and are ripe for action. They can be areas that are working well, and you see something else possible. They can be something entirely new and unpredictable. Without creating opportunities, your future will look very much like your past and present.

Step 2, Scoring

The Scoring Section is designed to check that your team has a shared understanding of your work world. If you cannot come to a quick consensus when you score each question, it is **very** important that you continue your dialogue. To score each statement, mark the scale at the level you can all agree to. The Score section may also spur deeper thinking - take advantage of this!

Step 3, Brainstorming Strengths and Opportunities

Now that your team has a shared understanding of the present, it is time to envision a compelling, energizing future. Add to the lists you developed during the Answering phase of the Self-Assessment by **Brainstorming** additional possibilities - push the boundaries into uncharted waters.

Leadership

This dimension looks at how leaders are involved in creating and sustaining values, organization direction, performance expectations and customer focus. It also looks at how the broader leadership approach integrates these elements, along with continuous learning and performance improvement.

Answer the following:

1. Who is part of the leadership system? *Who are the formal and informal leaders in your organization?*
2. How is leadership exercised? *How did you develop your mission, vision, values, and goals and who was involved? How do you ensure that all staff and stakeholders know what the organization's priorities are?*
3. *How do your senior leaders communicate and reinforce your priorities including vision and values, directions, expectations and customer focus?*
4. *What role does leadership play in reviewing your organization's performance? Are leaders actively involved in performance review? How do they drive performance excellence?*

Leadership Scores:

1. Who is part of the Leadership system?

Formal and informal leaders come from all levels of the organization, including senior leadership, managers, supervisors, team leaders and front-line staff.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

2. How is leadership exercised?

Leaders at all levels are actively encouraged to support our organization's vision, mission, values and goals.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

3. How do your senior leaders communicate and reinforce your organization's priorities, including vision and values, directions, expectations and customer focus?

Senior leaders regularly communicate and reinforce priorities through speech and action.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

Our priorities are clearly understood by staff throughout the organization.

0___10___20___30___40___50___60___70___80___90___100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

4. What role does leadership perform in reviewing performance?

Senior leaders regularly review and communicate how the organization is performing along all key measures.

0___10___20___30___40___50___60___70___80___90___100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

Brainstorming Strengths and Opportunities

Add to the lists you developed during the Answering phase of the Self-Assessment by having each member of the team share additional "Strengths" (passing is allowed). Record the ideas on the flipchart, discuss the ideas only enough to make sure they are accurately recorded. Keep going around until everyone's ideas are recorded. Repeat the same process for "Opportunities".

Strengths:

Opportunities:

Customer Focus

This dimension looks at how you understand your customers' needs and expectations, how you listen and respond to your customers needs, and how you build customer relationships.

Answer the following:

1. How do you know what your current and potential customers' expect of you?
How do you gather information from customers about the value and importance they place on key features of your services?

2. How do you determine that customer needs and expectations have been met or exceeded?

3. What do you do with customer complaints and feedback?

Customer Focus Scores:

1. How do you know what your current and potential customers expect of you?

We obtain information from customers about the value and importance they place on key service features.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

2. How do you determine that customer needs and expectations have been met or exceeded?

Customer data is collected, aggregated, evaluated, and shared with staff throughout the organization:

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

3. What do you do with customer complaints and feedback?

We use customer complaints and feedback to evaluate and improve customer relationships on a continual basis.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

Customers are always treated respectfully and customer complaints are addressed in a timely manner.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

Brainstorming Strengths and Opportunities

Add to the lists you developed during the Answering phase of the Self-Assessment by having each member of the team share additional "Strengths" (passing is allowed). Record the ideas on the flipchart, discuss the ideas only enough to make sure they are accurately recorded. Keep going around until everyone's ideas are recorded. Repeat the same process for "Opportunities".

Strengths:

Opportunities:

Strategic Planning Scores

1. How were your goals and strategies developed?

In developing our goals and strategies, we considered operational performance excellence, customer requirements, and resource allocations (to ensure optimal alignment of goals and actions).

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

2. How do you translate your goals into actions and who is involved?

There is a clear relationship between our goals and our key daily actions.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

Representatives from all levels and areas of the organization are closely involved with designing actions.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

3. How do you track your progress?

We regularly measure how well our actions are achieving their goals.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

Brainstorming Strengths and Opportunities

Add to the lists you developed during the Answering phase of the Self-Assessment by having each member of the team share additional "Strengths" (passing is allowed). Record the ideas on the flipchart, discuss the ideas only enough to make sure they are accurately recorded. Keep going around until everyone's ideas are recorded. Repeat the same process for "Opportunities".

Strengths:

Opportunities:

Information and Analysis

This dimension looks at how you gather and use data and information to support key processes and track performance and fiscal measures. Up-to-date and accurate data and information is critical to decision-making and performance improvement efforts.

Answer the following:

1. What types of information and data do you collect and use to support your key goals and work processes.
2. Do you have the information and data necessary to help you accomplish your goals?
3. What method or process do you use to track customer flow and the services they receive?
4. How do you ensure that information and data are as current and available as users need?

Brainstorming Strengths and Opportunities

Add to the lists you developed during the Answering phase of the Self-Assessment by having each member of the team share additional "Strengths" (passing is allowed). Record the ideas on the flipchart, discuss the ideas only enough to make sure they are accurately recorded. Keep going around until everyone's ideas are recorded. Repeat the same process for "Opportunities".

Strengths:

Opportunities:

Process Management

Process Management looks at how quality is built into key aspects of an organization's processes and systems, including requirements for product and service delivery processes (intake, assessment, referral and placement, etc) and contractor and partnering processes, involving all work units. It also looks at how processes are managed with accountability for quality, integrity and performance results.

Answer the following:

1. How do you communicate the "quality" requirements for key processes and services to staff?
2. How do you manage key processes and services to achieve and exceed performance goals and customer requirements?
3. How do you manage accountability for your key processes for delivering products and services?

Process Management Scores

1. How do you communicate the “quality” requirements for key processes and services to staff?

Requirements and standards are clearly communicated via performance goals & standards and team & unit work plans.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

Management & staff are responsible for knowing the requirements that affect their work.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

2. How do you manage key processes to achieve and exceed program performance goals and customer requirements?

We regularly collect and analyze both program and fiscal information on how well key processes and services are meeting their standards and producing results.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

If a process or service is not meeting standards or producing results, we identify issues and take appropriate action.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

Brainstorming Strengths and Opportunities

Add to the lists you developed during the Answering phase of the Self-Assessment by having each member of the team share additional "Strengths" (passing is allowed). Record the ideas on the flipchart, discuss the ideas only enough to make sure they are accurately recorded. Keep going around until everyone's ideas are recorded. Repeat the same process for "Opportunities".

Strengths:

Opportunities:

Human Resources

The Human Resource dimension examines the effectiveness of your organization's efforts to develop and realize the full potential of your staff. It also looks at your organization's efforts to build and maintain an environment conducive to performance excellence, full participation, and personal and organizational growth.

Answer the following:

1. How do you manage work in ways that create opportunities for initiative and self-directed responsibility?
2. How do you manage work to ensure effective communication and knowledge/skills sharing throughout the organization?
3. How are staff and teams recognized for achieving work and performance objectives?
4. How are education and training designed to support your approach to work and jobs?
5. How are new knowledge and skills reinforced on the job?

Human Resources Scores

1. How do you manage work in ways that create opportunities for initiative and self-directed responsibility?

We have formal/informal and short/long-term opportunities for employees to contribute via individual projects, cross-functional and/or cross-unit teams, problem-solving groups, etc; all are linked via technology.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

2. How do you manage work to ensure effective communication and knowledge/skill sharing throughout the organization?

We use information networks, e-mail, shared directories ,staff and team meetings, and cross-functional training to support communication and knowledge/skill sharing.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

3. How are staff and teams recognized for achieving work and performance objectives?

We have an integrated recognition system that uses both formal and informal approaches, and recognizes both skill building and direct contribution to achieving the organization's goals.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

Not at all

Somewhat

Mostly

Absolutely

4. How are education and training designed to support your approach to work?

Education and training are responsive to skill and job requirements, and have flexible delivery options.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

5. How are new knowledge and skills reinforced on the job?

Employees are assisted and supported in the practice and application of new skills by supervisors and peers.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

Brainstorming Strengths and Opportunities

Add to the lists you developed during the Answering phase of the Self-Assessment by having each member of the team share additional “Strengths” (passing is allowed). Record the ideas on the flipchart, discuss the ideas only enough to make sure they are accurately recorded. Keep going around until everyone’s ideas are recorded. Repeat the same process for “Opportunities”.

Strengths:

Opportunities:

Business Results

Leading organizations focus their efforts on achieving performance excellence in key business areas - customer satisfaction, WIA-mandated and other performance indicators, contractor performance, grants management and effective use of resources, etc. These organizations strive to meet and exceed their goals and they are constantly managing toward producing results.

Answer the following:

1. What are your key measures of customer satisfaction, and how are you doing compared to your goals?
2. What are your key performance measures, including WIA-mandated measures?
3. How do you track and measure performance?
4. How closely aligned are your performance measures to you vision, mission, values and goals?

Business Results Scores

1. How are you doing compared to your goals for customer satisfaction?

We consistently meet or exceed our goals.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

2. How are we doing compared to key performance goals/measures?

We consistently meet or exceed our goals.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

3. How do you track and measure performance?

We regularly collect and analyze both program and fiscal performance information on how well key processes and services are meeting their standards and producing results.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

4. How closely aligned are your performance measures to you vision, mission, values and goals?

Our performance measures are closely linked to our vision, mission, values and goals.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Not at all Somewhat Mostly Absolutely

Brainstorming Strengths and Opportunities

Add to the lists you developed during the Answering phase of the Self-Assessment by having each member of the team share additional “Strengths” (passing is allowed). Record the ideas on the flipchart, discuss the ideas only enough to make sure they are accurately recorded. Keep going around until everyone’s ideas are recorded. Repeat the same process for “Opportunities”.

Strengths

Opportunities

Action Planning

Creating a powerful action plan starts with recognizing your strengths, knowing the opportunities you have, and choosing the outcomes and results you will produce.

Step 1, Summarize and Group the Strengths and Opportunities:

Review all of your strengths and opportunities. Spend time to see where there are similarities and differences, where there are patterns. Often, you may start to see new strengths and opportunities.

Step 2, What Outcomes and Results Will You Produce?

A powerful approach is to list outcomes, results, or areas in which you want to work *without making any commitment at first*. Get everything up on a flipchart, then, choose what to act on and what to leave for now. You can always come back to something later on.

Get clear about what you want to accomplish. This may be as simple as choosing one or two of the opportunities to act on. It may involve a complete re-thinking of your strategic plan and goals.

How will you know if you have accomplished your outcomes and results? Be specific about dates and measures.

Step 3, The Action Plan

Identify the actions that you need to take for each of the areas. Be sure you identify what, who, by when, and how will you will know it is done for each of the actions. **It is more important to have clarity, commitment and accountability than it is to have a big or impressive list of actions.*