



Missouri Quality Award

Guidance for
Producing a
Well-Written
Scorebook

Dear Examiners,

To help you write comments that are clear and informative, we have created the Missouri Quality Award *Guidance for Producing a Well-Written Scorebook* for the Missouri Quality Award process.

We know from the applicants that they are eager to apply your comments to their organizations' processes and practices. Therefore, this document provides suggestions and examples to assist you in writing high-quality comments, ready to be used in the evaluation process and, ultimately, in the feedback report that every applicant receives.

Please take some time to review the information presented here, and use it as a guide for writing beneficial comments for the applicants. Thanks for your commitment to improving Missouri organizations.

Missouri Quality Award Office

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Quality Dimensions for Scorebook Comments

A well-written scorebook demonstrates the following quality dimensions:

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>What It Means</i>
Accessible	Is readable and understandable
Reliable	Is consistent
Informative	Shares information and reflects that the Examiners know and understand the organization
Actionable	The applicant can make use of the feedback
Credible	Is believable for the applicant
Responsive	Is completed in a timely manner
Secure	Maintains confidentiality

COMMENT GUIDELINES

A well-written comment addresses the following:

Content Guidelines	Style Guidelines
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uses a single, simple, complete thought to clearly specify the strength (using specific examples from the application) or OFI (using specific omissions or problems identified from the application). 2. Addresses central requirements of the Criteria and does not go beyond the requirements of the Criteria. 3. Is most relevant and important to the applicant based on its key factors. 4. Draws linkages between Items or between an Item and the applicant’s Organizational Profile. 5. Does not contradict other comments found elsewhere in the scorebook. Contradictions may occur when a writer does not clearly specify the strength or opportunity as noted above. 6. Is nonprescriptive. Refrain from using “could,” “should,” and “would.” 7. Is nonjudgmental. Refrain from using terms such as “good,” “bad,” or “inadequate.” State the observation in a factual manner, e.g., “customer satisfaction rates have increased over the past three years.” 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uses such words as “the applicant,” “the organization,” “the company,” or “the school,” to refer to the applicant. The applicant’s name is used only in Stage 3 Scorebooks. 2. Uses the applicant’s terminology when appropriate. 3. Uses a polite, professional, and positive tone. 4. For Stages 1 and 2 Scorebooks, tell what is missing if something “is not clear.” However, do not use “it is not clear” in Stage 3 Scorebooks. 5. Highlights an applicant’s substantive strength or OFI, not its writing style or graphics. For example, it avoids phrases such as “should be addressed in Item 3.2,” “x axis is not clear,” or “is poorly described,” because these are criticisms of the writing, not the applicant’s performance system. 6. Identifies strengths or OFIs according to where the Item falls in the Criteria, not by where the applicant places the information in the application. 7. Uses vocabulary and phraseology from the Criteria, Core Values, and Scoring Guidelines. 8. Avoids jargon and acronyms, unless the applicant uses them. 9. Provides a figure number when reference is made to information from a figure.

Worksheet Format Essentials

Key Factors Worksheet

- Organize into five sections using the Areas to Address (Organizational Environment, Organizational Relationships, Competitive Environment, Strategic Challenges, Performance Improvement System) from the “Preface: Organizational Profile” section of the appropriate Criteria for Performance Excellence booklet.
- Limit the worksheet to 1–2 pages.
- Use phrases rather than complete sentences.
- Delineate phrases with bullets.
- Use a single space between phrases.
- Leave two lines between each of the five sections.

Key Themes Worksheet

- Organize into three sections to address the three questions concerning important strengths, significant opportunities, and key results.
- Limit the worksheet to 2–3 pages.
- Write 2–3 sentences per comment.
- Write comments that use complete sentences and that meet the Comment Guidelines.
- Delineate comments with bullets.
- Leave two lines between each of the comments.
- For Stage 2 and Stage 3, write comments that are “feedback ready.” These comments should consist of 1–3 complete, actionable, nonprescriptive sentences that cite specific examples from the application, link to the applicant’s Key Factors or the Criteria Core Values as appropriate, and also meet both the Content and Style requirements of the Comment Guidelines.

Item Worksheet

- Complete one worksheet for each Item.
- Organize the information into three sections addressing most important key business/organization factors, strengths, and opportunities for improvement.
- Limit the worksheet to 1–2 pages.
- Use a single, simple, complete thought per comment (2–3 sentences)
- Provide 6–10 comments per Item.
- Write comments that meet the Comment Guidelines.
- Use notations (e.g., a, b, c and +, ++, –, –) to delineate comments.
- Leave two lines between each of the comments.
- Include a completed Site Visit Issues Worksheet Stage 2 only; do not fill out this section for Stages 1 and 3.
- Include a completed Change Due to Site Visit Findings section only for Stage 3; do not fill out this section for Stages 1 and 2.
- For Stage 2 and Stage 3, write comments that are “feedback ready.” These comments should consist of 2–3 complete, actionable, nonprescriptive sentences that cite specific examples from the application, link to the applicant’s Key Factors or the Criteria Core Values as appropriate, and also meet both the content and style requirements of the Comment Guidelines.

Grammatical and Style Considerations

We want you to focus on the substance of your comments. However, to the degree that you can, please write your comments keeping the following considerations in mind. This will save time and effort for the scorebook writers and editors.

Tense

- When possible, use the present tense of all verbs throughout the scorebook.
*Example: The applicant provides **(not provided)** no comparative results for product quality making it difficult for leaders to assess progress relative to competitors.*

Active Voice

- Use active voice frequently; use passive voice infrequently.
- Active verbs direct action towards an object; passive verbs direct action towards a subject.
*Example: The Director of Human Resources leads the survey process for assessing employee satisfaction **(active voice)**.*
*The survey process for assessing employee satisfaction is led by the Director of Human Resources **(passive voice)**.*

Use of Acronyms

- Spell out all abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used and indicate the abbreviation in parentheses.
Example: Human Resource (HR) managers are responsible for leading the Quality Improvement Projects (QIPs).
- If a term is used only once, do not abbreviate.

Number Style

- Spell out numbers from one through ten.
- Use figures for numbers above ten, unless a number is used as the first word of the sentence. In that case, the number should be spelled out.
Example: There were five union workers in ten meetings.
Eleven meetings are held throughout the quarter.
- When numbers greater and less than ten occur in the same sentence, use figures for the numbers.

Grammatical and Style Considerations – continued

Capitalization

- Use consistent capitalization throughout the scorebook.
- Use the applicant’s convention for capitalizing organizational divisions, departments, staff titles, and the names of teams and internal processes.
*Example: Director of Human Resources
Data Process Improvement Team*
- Do not capitalize “the organization” or “the applicant.”
- Capitalize references to application areas
*Example: Category 5; Item 5.1; or
Figure 5.1-1*
- Capitalize the following MQA-related terms:
 - ◄ Organizational Profile
 - ◄ Category
 - ◄ Item
 - ◄ Criteria
 - ◄ Areas to Address
- Do not capitalize the following MQA-related terms:
 - ◄ application
 - ◄ approach
 - ◄ key factors
 - ◄ deployment
 - ◄ consensus

Agreement

- Refer to the applicant or organization as “it,” not “their.”
*Example: The organization considers its
(not their) employees as co-owners.*
- Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number, gender, and person.
Example: Each staff member should submit his/her (not their) expense account.

Grammatical and Style Considerations – continued

Common Misuse of Words

Two commonly misused words are:

- “Principle” is always used as a noun; “principal” can be used as an adjective, as well as a noun meaning the head of a school.

Example: The principal cause of the strike was the principal’s strong principles.

“Ensure” instead of “insure:”

- ❖ *ensure* means to make sure or certain
- ❖ *insure* means to guarantee against financial loss

Figure References

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- In Figure references, spell out the word “Figure.”

Example: Figure 1.1-1 (not Fig. 1.1-1)

Commas in a Series Rule

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- When three or more items are listed in a series and the last item is preceded by “and,” “or,” or “nor,” place a comma before the conjunction as well as between the other items.

*Example: No **federal, state, or local** sanctions have been imposed against the applicant for the past five years.*

Compound Adjectives

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- A compound adjective consists of two or more words that function as a unit and express a single thought. Hyphenate the elements of the compound adjective that occur before a noun.

Examples:

Long-term plans

Quality-related material

World-class business results

Three-day course

On-the-job training

Patient-focused care

Fact-based system

- However, it is not necessary to hyphenate when the idea is a commonly known compound (e.g., quality improvement strategies, 90 percent rating, and process improvement team).

Examples of Improving Written Comments

Original Comment	What is the problem?	Improved Comment
Item 1.1		
<p>+ b The Leadership Team, along with other management committees throughout the organization, meets regularly and uses numerous excellent communication methods to describe their activities, e.g., balanced scorecards, to all team members. Moreover, the Leadership Team communicates information about their organizational planning via the same vehicles. By communicating so readily with all employees, the organization has made great strides towards inclusion and improved morale.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgmental – “excellent,” “great strides” • Conveys more than one concept in the comment 	<p>+ b The Leadership Team uses a balanced scorecard of performance measures to review and to communicate how well the organization is operating and where improvement is needed.</p>
<p>- a Although the Leadership Team attempts to create and maintain a focus on student learning; to communicate the organization’s mission, vision, and core values; and to reinforce ethical behavior, it has been unsuccessful in communicating its message throughout the organization. The applicant should develop techniques that would enable this information to be cascaded throughout the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgmental (“unsuccessful”) • Prescriptive (“should develop techniques”) • Lacks a positive tone 	<p>- a It is not clear how members of the Leadership Team, other than the principal, participate in creating and maintaining a focus on student learning; communicate the mission, vision, and core values; and reinforce ethical behavior.</p>
Item 2.1		
<p>+ b The methods to develop short-term organizational strategic objectives appear to be systematic, including the expressed needs of all key stakeholders. The applicant ensures that the necessary stakeholders participate in the process and they incorporate their input into the planning process. After the information is gathered, the applicant attempts to align the stakeholders’ needs with the applicant’s own strategic priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wordy (3 sentences long; can be written more concisely) • Judgmental (“works hard to ensure”) • Doesn’t reference appropriate figures from application 	<p>+ b The Strategic Planning Process (Figure 2.1-1) uses a systematic approach to determine short term organizational strategic objectives that consider the needs of all key stakeholders (Figure 2.1-3), aligned with the applicant’s most important strategic challenges.</p>

Examples of Improving Written Comments – continued

Original Comment	What is the problem?	Improved Comment
Item 2.1 (continued)		
<p>-- a The applicant's strategy development process, which is used for developing short-term plans and objectives, is illustrated in Figure 2.1-1. However, the application is lacking a description of how the company completes its longer-term planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple concepts expressed in one comment • Three sentences long • Judgmental 	<p>-- a Although the applicant uses a systematic strategy development process (Strategic Planning Process, Figure 2.a-1) to develop short term plans and objectives, there does not appear to be a longer-term planning process that includes long-term considerations such as market changes, customer requirements, and competitive environment or that develops longer-term strategic plans and objectives. Without such a plan, the applicant's ability to ensure that its decisions are aligned with its strategic directions or its ability to track progress relative to its strategic objectives and action plans is compromised.</p>
Item 3.2		
<p>+ a The multi-faceted customer service center approach enables callers to accomplish several tasks with one call, and is one of applicant's more successful processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague ("accomplish several tasks" without identifying the task) • Value laden ("one of the applicant's more successful processes") 	<p>+ a The integrated customer service center approach improves customer satisfaction and retention by enabling callers to place an order, file a complaint, make a suggestion, request information, and/or obtain assistance without ever having to transfer to another service representative.</p>
<p>- a By offering the telephone as the only mechanics for customer access and by not explaining if other current or potential customers would prefer another means of access, the applicant is limiting its customer service and perhaps even preventing new customers from using its services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescriptive ("...preventing new customers from...") • Critical tone 	<p>- a The applicant offers only one mechanism for customer access (the telephone), and it is not apparent that it has an approach to determine whether its current or potential customers require other means of access, such as the Internet.</p>

Examples of Improving Written Comments - continued

Original Comment	What is the problem?	Improved Comment
Item 4.2		
+ b The applicant identifies issues pertaining to hardware and software in its weekly debriefs and appropriate action is taken.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vague (the “appropriate action” isn’t identified) 	+ b Hardware and software issues, identified through interviews, observations, and surveys, are reviewed weekly. They are either assigned a time priority for solving by IT managers or forwarded to the IM Planning Team if they connect to a strategic objective, cross multiple units, or involve expenditures greater than budgetary allotment.
- a The applicant states that patient privacy is a key customer requirement. However, the application fails to include the approach that is used to guarantee patients their privacy that they say they guarantee, both within the facility and with external service providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judgmental (“fails to include”) Tone (“that they say they guarantee”) 	- a Although the applicant states that patient privacy is a key customer requirement, no approach is described for ensuring the security and confidentiality of patient data and for sharing medical information between the applicant and external providers of medical services.
Item 5.1		
+ a Physicians, staff, and health care students are involved in work system teams, thereby, supporting key organizational company core values and contributing to conditions that support high performance. This also ensures the applicant’s continued profitability and competitiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prescriptive 	+ a The applicant’s involvement of physicians, staff, and health care students in work system teams promotes cooperation, innovation, increased understanding of how work and jobs are connected, and the flexibility to keep current with changing health care service needs.
- a The applicant states that a team-based structure is a critical element of its day-to-day operations. Yet, there is no evidence of how the applicant puts teaming into effect throughout the organization. Without this critical information, the application is missing adequate information for a comprehensive evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical tone (“critical information”) Written from the Examiner’s perspective, rather than the applicant’s 	- a Although the applicant states that a team-based structure is a critical element of its day-to-day operations, it is not apparent how the applicant systematically reinforces its commitment to teaming. For example, it is not clear how the applicant addresses employees’ performance as team members in its performance evaluation process or how recognition programs support team accomplishment in addition to individual accomplishment.

Examples of Improving Written Comments - continued

Original Comment	What is the problem?	Improved Comment
Item 6.2		
<p>+ a The applicant's annual Student Services Design Process is used to identify requirements for incorporation into the design and delivery of services. This ensures the alignment of student needs and delivery of appropriate services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague (lacks information re. process for arriving at design and delivery) • Judgmental ("an effective way") • Omits linkage to the Org'l Profile 	<p>+ a The applicant's use of the Student Services Design Process enables incorporating requirements into the design and delivery of services. Key are customized stakeholder surveys and balancing stakeholder needs with organizational mission and priorities.</p>
<p>- a The applicant obtains feedback from all stakeholders with regard to managing student services. However, a process for using the feedback systematically in order to improve these services is glaringly omitted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescriptive ("the applicant is limiting its ability") • Critical tone ("glaringly omitted") 	<p>- a Although the applicant obtains feedback from all stakeholders regarding the management of student services, there is no process in place to systematically use this feedback for improvement of the services. Without such a process, the applicant is limiting its ability to improve these processes and be responsive to its various stakeholders.</p>

NOTE: For site visits only - The phrasing should more specifically reflect the consequence of the opportunity for improvement since the Site Visit Team obtains additional information and understanding of the issue as a result of the site visit.

For example:

Comment at consensus:

The lack of segmentation of customer data may result in the applicant not being able to identify opportunities for improving customer satisfaction.

Comment at site visit:

The lack of segmentation of customer data results in the applicant not being able to identify which customer group most directly influenced the negative trend in customer satisfaction.

Writing Effective Comments for Category 7, Results

Well-written Category 7 comments frequently address the following questions:

- Trend Analysis –
 - Is the trend direction positive or negative?
 - What is the desirable direction?
 - Are explanations provided for significant positive or negative changes?
- How does the result link to other Categories (e.g., strategic processes, supplier and partner relationships)? Are data presented in Category 7 for measures that are referred to in other Categories of the application?
- Are all important results presented? Are data focused on the critical organization performance results (e.g., customer requirements, compliance with regulatory requirements)? Are there any gaps in the data?
- Is the amount of data provided sufficient (e.g., number of cycles of data for trend data, percentage of stakeholder population)?
- Are the data appropriately segmented?
- Do the data represent both short- and long-term priorities?
- How does the organization measure effectiveness, and are these measures presented?
- Are comparative data presented, and are they appropriate?
- What are the standard measures in this field? Is there any significance to the lack of any of these measures in the application?
- Are the data normalized (presented in a way that takes into account the various size factors)?

Original Comment	What is the problem?	Improved Comment
<i>Item 7.1</i>		
+ The applicant has demonstrated great success with regard to how well its students have performed at transfer institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omits reference to figure in application showing results • Judgmental/ value laden (“demonstrated great success”) 	+ Results for student success at transfer institutions (Figure 7.5-1) demonstrate improvements from 1995-2000 and are evidence that the applicant’s programs are aligned with the requirements of its receiving schools.

Building the Key Themes

A key theme is an idea that occurs in multiple places in the application and/or is critical to the operation of the organization.

