2023 CAPE Eureka Award
for Performance Excellence
Site Visit Guidelines for Examiners

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Site Visit Overview

The Site Visit is a critical phase of the evaluation process. The Site Visit enables a team of examiners to more fully understand how well the applicant organization is applying the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence. ***The ultimate purpose of the Site Visit is to verify the Site Visit team's understanding of key strengths and to clarify its understanding of key opportunities for improvement (OFIs).*** For each applicant that receives a site visit, the team will (1) communicate the findings to the CAPE Panel of Judges, (2) determine the feedback that is most relevant for the applicant, (3) help ensure that the applicant can demonstrate role-model practices to the public should it be named an award recipient, and (4) ensure that there are no prevalent issues that would negatively affect the program if the applicant organization was designated as a Eureka Award recipient. The Site Visit team will recommend an award to the CAPE Panel of Judges based off their evaluation. Final award decisions are made by the CAPE Panel of Judges and approved by the California Council for Excellence (CCE) Board of Directors.

What is the purpose of the Site Visit?

- Verify and clarify the comments from the Consensus Review Scorebook
- Determine the most relevant feedback
- Identify role model practices

Site Visit Process Deliverable

The Site Visit Scorebook. Through the production of this scorebook, the examination team reaches agreement on the applicant's strengths and opportunities for improvement (OFIs), the resulting scoring range for each item, and the overall scoring band for the application. The team members accomplish their work through extensive planning, focusing on what is most important to the applicant, communicating with each other and the applicant, and contributing to a shared understanding of findings—which is presented in the form of a scorebook.

The Site Visit Scorebook includes several worksheets:

- **Key Factors Worksheet** and a **Key Themes Worksheet**, which are updated from the Consensus Review to reflect new information collected during the site visit process;
- **Item Worksheets** containing the applicant's important strengths and opportunities for improvement;
- **Highest-Ranking Official (HRO) Worksheet** listing questions and answers obtained by the team leader and CCE staff/representative during the interview with the Applicant's highest-ranking official;
- **Scoring Summary Sheet** that captures changes to team scores for each Baldrige Criteria Item along with an overall scoring band for the applicant;
- **Site Visit Issue Worksheets**, which are used to 1) map out an information collection strategy, and 2) record the findings and conclusions of the Examiners related to specific issues needing clarification or verification;
- **Summary of Sites Visited**, which is a 1-page document capturing the number and type of employees interviewed at each site that is used by the judges' panel as part of their award recommendation process;
- **Signature page**, on which all Examiners sign and attest to the accuracy of the feedback report.

The Site Visit Scorebook is due to the Lead Judge and the CCE Office by ***<u>December 22.</u>*** The Panel of Judges will use this scorebook to make accurate decisions about whether to recommend the applicant for the Award. Note, that **the Site Visit Scorebook is not shared with the applicant.** The applicant receives a final Feedback Report at the end of the entire evaluation process.

Three Phases of The Site Visit Process

1. Planning

During the Planning Phase, the examination team spends roughly 35-40 hours preparing for the site visit itself. This time includes conference calls and preparing Site Visit Issues Worksheets (SVIs). This phase also includes traveling to and meeting at a hotel close to the applicant's facility Sunday afternoon, the day before the site visit kicks off. Time spent in advance preparing plans and documents will affect the time needed in this session.

2. On-Site

The On-Site Phase of the process is where team members work at the applicant's site to investigate and analyze information presented in the application, along with the conclusions reached through Consensus Review so that the team can document the answers to the questions in the SVIs developed during the Planning Phase.

The On-Site Phase is an intense time for the team members. This phase usually lasts three days, Monday through Wednesday, but can vary from two to four days depending on the size and geographic locations of the applicant. During this phase, team members can expect to spend about 10 hours at the applicant's facility each day and as much as 4 hours each evening back at the hotel doing both individual work and work with the team. These times vary by individual, but the important point is that team members must work diligently during this phase to ensure that they have the information and evidence they need from the applicant before closing the On-Site Phase.

Depending on the size of the organization, it will likely require visiting more than one site. For example, if the organization's headquarters is in Orange County but its largest facility is in San Diego, the team may need to visit both sites.

Day 1 of the site visit begins with a one-hour meeting with the applicant at the applicant's headquarters, during which the Team Leader makes introductory remarks and introduces the Site Visit Team members. The Team Leader presents a brief overview of the CAPE Eureka Award and site visit process and procedures. The applicant then welcomes the team, introduces its representatives, and presents other material as it chooses. Item Leads then meet with the applicant's representatives and pursue the specific Criteria Items that they have been assigned.

Days 2 and 3 and possibly 4 are spent at the applicant's facilities either conducting follow-up meetings and interviews to obtain additional information to clarify site visit issues or reviewing additional documents from the applicant.

After the team is satisfied that all issues have been verified or clarified, the team leader and CCE/CAPE representative hold a brief closing meeting with appropriate representatives of the organization. This normally occurs on Thursday morning of the site visit week, but this can vary depending on the size and complexity of the applicant. The Team Leader explains the next steps in the process, thanks the applicant for the hospitality shown to the Examiners, and commends the applicant for pursuing excellence. The applicant also makes brief closing remarks. This is the last opportunity for the applicant to provide information to the team. Once the meeting has concluded, the team will have no further contact with the applicant.

3. Post-Site

After the closing meeting at the applicant's facility, the team returns to the hotel to close out its work. The team completes all remaining SVIs, and then completes the remainder of the Site Visit Scorebook. This typically begins Wednesday evening and lasts through Friday morning or afternoon but can vary depending on the size and complexity of the applicant. Some of this work is accomplished individually and some is accomplished during periodic team meetings. Team meetings must be attended by all team members.

Confidentiality

Applicant organizations must have confidence that the examination team will respect their time, openness, and be sensitive to information shared.

Site Visits are considered confidential. Team members should not:

- Disclose the name of the organization receiving the site visit.
- Share any information gathered with others outside of the examination team or CCE staff.
- Disclose the names of individuals interviewed.
- Make copies of any materials gathered for purposes of assessing organizational excellence.
- The team should gather only needed information to clarify/verify strengths, OFIs or other information presented in the application or criteria.

Site Visit Team Responsibilities

During Site Visit the examiners will work to investigate and analyze information presented in the application, along with the conclusions reached through Consensus Review so that the team can document the answers to the questions in the SVIs. CCE staff will be available to the Site Visit Team to ensure that the process is followed; however, the staff will not participate in the evaluation of the applicant. Lastly, each team will have an assigned Lead Judge who will not participate on the Site Visit but is available as a resource to the team.

Each participant on the Site Visit Team has certain responsibilities. In general, these are:

Site Visit Team

- Participate in Site Visit preparations, including (but not limited to):
    - Prepare Site Visit Issues Worksheets (Process and Results) based on the Consensus Scorebook. Included in the worksheets will be the following:
        - A list of employees by title or function or departments/groups in the applicant's organization to interview and the question(s) they will ask.
        - A list of documents to review. **Documents requested will be limited to no more than 15 per Category for Process Categories (1-6) and 15-20 documents total for Category 7 – Results.**
- Prepare focus group walkaround questions (per Category) about key processes and the use of data and information, or to resolve specific Site Visit Issues.
- Gather data needed to verify/clarify Site Visit Issues, feedback, and scores.
- Focus on collecting needed information with minimal intrusion on the applicant and their delivery of services.
- Represent the California Awards for Performance Excellence program in a positive manner in all interactions with the applicant organization.

Site Visit Team Leader

In addition to the responsibilities laid out above, the Site Visit Team Leader will:

- Lead preparations for the Site Visit.
- Develop the Site Visit agenda.
- Develop the document request (using the template provided by the program).
- Communicate with the applicant organization prior to the Site Visit. CCE should be copied on all communications.
- Lead the development of the Site Visit Scorebook.
- Lead the reporting of findings to the CAPE Panel of Judges.

Lead Judge

- Provide the team with guidance as they prepare for the Site Visit.
    - Ensure that all Site Visit issues are grounded in the criteria.
    - Communicate any Site Visit issues identified by the CAPE Panel of Judges.
- Be available by phone during the Site Visit if any questions or issues arise.

- Prepare the team leader to report their findings to the CAPE Panel of Judges.
- Note: The Lead Judge **does not** re-evaluate the application, or help the team make any evaluation decisions.

CCE/CAPE Liaison

- Serve as liaison between the applicant organization and the Site Visit Team.
- Assist with Site Visit logistics and development of the agenda.
- Ensure Examiners understand and follow the Site Visit processes, including:
    - Information collected is needed to clarify/verify what is provided in the application. Examiners should not go beyond the scope of the criteria.
    - Team sufficiently documents information gathered to support strengths, opportunities for improvement, and score.
    - Any comments provided to the team by the CAPE Panel of Judges are addressed.
- Confer with Lead Judge if an issue arises that cannot be resolved.
- CCE/CAPE Liaison does NOT participate in the evaluation of the application (identification of applicant strengths, opportunities for improvement, or score) but can assist with tasks that do NOT impact the evaluation process; including (but not limited to):
    - Taking verbatim notes and typing when dictated to.
    - Setting up logistics for the Site Visit.

Site Visit Team Behavior and Focus

The primary purpose of the Site Visit is to verify the team's understanding of key strengths and to clarify its understanding of key OFIs. This allows the team to provide an accurate, high value feedback report for the applicant, and provides the necessary information to allow the Panel of Judges to determine an award level decision. During the Site Visit, the Site Visit Team should:

- Ask questions to understand.
- Ensure that OFIs that remain in the Scorebook and are accurate and relevant.
- Accept information provided by applicant as accurate.

Policy on Interview Participation

The Site Visit Team will schedule interviews related to specific criteria categories or other Site Visit Issues throughout the Site Visit. It is up to the applicant to identify the relevant parties that should participate in those interviews. **Interviews should only include those directly involved in the subject under discussion**. Examiners should clarify areas of responsibility with the applicant and confer with the Staff Liaison if questions arise. The Site Visit Team will want to talk to a wide variety of staff.

Recording Applicant Interviews

Participants in applicant interviews are not permitted to record video sessions.

Policy on Interviewing Contract Staff

The sole focus of the Site Visit is the applicant. Examiners are trying to learn more about the operations of the applicant organization, and not the corporate/parent company, suppliers, or any other affiliated organizations. As such, Examiners are instructed to only interview staff who work for the applicant. In some instances, it may be appropriate to interview contract staff. If the contract staff takes day-to-day direction from the applicant, it would be appropriate to interview them. This could be defined by a requirement that the employee (contract staff) adhere to the center's internal policies/code of conduct, or that the employee (contract staff) reports directly to a staff member of the applicant. Examiners should clarify reporting relationships with the applicant and confer with the Staff Liaison if questions arise. Examiners may also interview volunteers if they have been identified as part of the workforce, such as in P.1a(3).

Site Visit Issues Worksheets, Scorebook and Scores

The focus of the team's work is to improve the quality of the feedback comments and update the applicant's scores and feedback comments based on findings during the Site Visit. The team will complete this work through use of the Site Visit Issues Worksheets, Scorebook and Scoring Summary. While conducting the Site Visit the team will:

- Take notes during interviews and meetings.
- Document information and findings within the Site Visit Issues Worksheets.
- Identify and reflect any necessary revisions to the Scorebook based on new information obtained. Data gathered should support the addition, deletion, modification, or keeping of strengths and OFIs.
- Adjust scores based on new information. Each Item score will be evaluated by the team on site. The team can agree to:
    - Keep the Item score the same.
    - Increase OR decrease an Item score
        - Decreases or increases of an Item score of more than 10 percentage points require a written explanation to the Judges via the Site Visit Issues Worksheet.
        - Significant changes in scoring should also be reviewed with the Lead Judge via conference call, prior to the Judges meeting. The team should contact the Lead Judge if they need guidance in dealing with scoring changes.
    - All changes to scores will be in increments of 5 percentage points. For example, starting at 30 the score could increase to 35, 40, 45, etc.

Site Visit Check-in Call with Lead Judge

It is recommended to have a check-in call with the Lead Judge prior to Site Visit.

Highest-Ranking Official (HRO) Interview

Before the Site Visit, the Team Lead and CCE/CAPE Liaison will have a discussion with the applicant's highest-ranking official. The purpose of this discussion is to answer any questions and discuss any potential issues at the organization that the program should be aware of. This discussion should uncover any significant problems or issues that have happened within the organization, which if the organization were to be named a Eureka recipient, might diminish the credibility of the award program. The applicant is expected to be forthcoming and honest during this discussion.

Opening Meeting

The opening meeting is held for employees of the applicant and the Site Visit Team. The applicant will discuss any deviation(s) from this guideline with the team leader. If examiners are asked to introduce themselves, they provide only their names. Examiners are NOT to provide additional background information, such as their Examiner experience, credentials, title, work experience, or specialty in their organization.

The key components of the opening meeting are:

- Introductions of the Site Visit Team members and a presentation by the Site Visit team leader about the Eureka Award and the Site Visit Review (up to 15 mins).

A presentation by the applicant (up to 45 mins) which includes their business model presentation.

Additional Meetings with the Applicant

After the opening meeting, the team meets with the applicant's category counterparts. In addition, the examiners conduct interviews in pairs, and they review documents and associated results. In most cases, examiners are not permitted to interview customers, suppliers, patients, students, parents, or nonemployees (except for volunteers who are supervised by the applicant). Site Visit Teams check with CCE staff for guidance. Each day the team leader checks in with the applicant's point of contact (POC) to finalize the schedule for the next day and to discuss any emerging issues.

Applicant Materials (Documents to Review)

Examiners will submit a document request to the applicant prior to Site Visit. All applicant documents will be hosted electronically by the applicant and shared with the examination team through a secure file link with view-only access (please, disable the download function). To keep the list manageable for both the applicant and team, we place a limit on documents requested, to no more than 15 per process categories 1-6, and 15-20 documents total for Category 7 results. Sometimes it is necessary to request documents on-site, but these requests should be kept to a minimum. The documents requested should be organized in the following folders:

- Category 1 - Leadership
- Category 2 - Strategy
- Category 3 – Customers
- Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management
- Category 5 – Workforce
- Category 6 – Operations
- Item 7.1 – Product and Process Results
- Item 7.2 – Customer Results
- Item 7.3 – Workforce Results
- Item 7.4 – Leadership and Governance Results
- Item 7.5 – Financial, Market, and Strategy Results
- Documents Requested During Site Visit (applicant should place any documents requested during Site Visit in this folder)
- Interview Logs

Team Meetings

Daytime: these meetings are scheduled each day, preferably midmorning and midafternoon, to exchange information and adjust the schedule.

Evening: team members debrief on their assigned items and the related SVIs during the nightly team meeting. These meetings include discussion on key themes, concerns, needed adjustments to strategies and interviews, and any newly identified SVIs. The team leader also uses the evening meetings to monitor team members' progress on closing out their SVIs and on their assignments. If any examiners are not making sufficient progress, it may be necessary for the team leader to determine who will provide assistance to them. Make sure that the "analysis questions" on the SVI Worksheets are not forgotten as examiners prepare their worksheets.

During the on-site and post-site phases, team members keep all notes of their interviews and meetings. This helps the examiners to properly document findings and conclusions on SVI Worksheets. After any relevant information is captured by the team members, these notes must be shredded or deleted.

Last Chance

Before the closing meeting, the Site Visit Team must identify any important, remaining site visit issues and discuss what information is needed to close them. It may be necessary to reassign team members to address critical issues. This is normally done on the evening before the day of the closing meeting. Throughout the site visit, the team follows the site visit plan but is flexible, expects surprises, and adjusts, as necessary. The team needs to be sensitive to the applicant. If the applicant says the team is missing the point, the team must make time to listen. If a team member behaves inappropriately, the team leader must immediately confer with CCE staff and take the necessary action.

Closing Meeting

The closing meeting signifies the end of the on-site phase of the site visit. The closing meeting occurs the day after the team has completed their interviews. This is to provide the team with time to do a final check to ensure they have enough information to close all SVIs.

The closing meeting should last 10-30 minutes. The team leader and CCE staff will attend this meeting. To the extent possible, the applicant should limit its attendees to the HRO, the POC, and designated members of the Senior Leadership team if requested. At the end of the meeting, the team leader presents a five-minute closing, using visuals provided by CCE. The meeting is intended to simply present the next steps (using the slides) and thank the applicant for its hospitality and support of the Program. **After the closing meeting, the team may not accept any data or documents, and has no further contact with the applicant.**

Completing the Site Visit Scorebook

Completing the Site Visit Scorebook is the culmination of the Site Visit Review. Team members should keep in mind that completing the scorebook requires a significant amount of time and energy. To make the process most efficient and effective, team members must update their SVI Worksheets throughout the week. This helps the team track their progress and ensures that all needed information is obtained before the closing meeting at the applicant’s site.

The team leader revises the final Key Themes Worksheet with updated comments resulting from the findings and the conclusions noted on the SVI and Item Worksheets. Team members provide input on the comments on the Key Themes Worksheet through ongoing discussion and feedback. To finalize key themes, just as for scoring, the team leader facilitates a team discussion.

As a final step in the evaluation process, the team works as a group to confirm the scoring range and score for each item and to determine the overall bands for process items and for results items. Item Leads propose recommended scoring ranges and provide rationale and indicates whether the scoring range changed or stayed the same. Finally, the team leader conducts a scoring discussion to confirm the ranges or to come to a consensus if needed. It is important for the team leader to ensure that the impact on comments, the scores on the Item Worksheets, and the scores on the Score Summary Worksheet match.

The team then refers to the Scoring Band Descriptors and determines which band descriptor for process items and which for results items most accurately reflects the team’s view of the applicant. If the team is considering a scoring band change, the discussion must include reasons for that change (the team leader records the reasons to share during the Judges’ Meeting). These scoring band numbers are included on the Score Summary Worksheet. The Scoring Band Descriptors are used in the opening paragraph of the applicant’s feedback report.

The team lead drafts the Summary of Sites Visited, shares it with team members, and all team members sign the signature page.

Scorebook Development Checklist

- Assigned team member(s) revise the Key Factors Worksheet, the Key Themes Worksheet, and the Summary of Sites Visited. Updating these worksheets continues throughout the visit.

- During site visit, team members close out assigned SVI Worksheets and revise Item Worksheets. Remember that updating worksheets continues throughout the visit. Occasionally, new SVIs arise because of additional information gathered during the site visit.

- Starting with the 1st day (Sunday planning) meeting and throughout the site visit, team members present an oral summary and status of their SVIs to the team. Later, they discuss how the Item Worksheets have changed from the Consensus Scorebook. The team discusses, agrees, and revises. There are typically a couple iterations of this process. Team members modify and finalize their SVI Worksheets based on the team's input.

- In MS Teams, examiners post their draft Item Worksheets with updated comments, and they recommend a scoring range resulting from their respective SVI Worksheets. Team members review all Item Worksheets and provide input on the comments directly in MS Teams. Again, this process usually has a few iterations. The team will later agree on a scoring range for each item, again based on comments and impacts of the SVIs.

- Team members modify their Item Worksheets based on the team's input.

- An assigned team member refines the Key Themes Worksheet on an ongoing basis. The team conducts a final discussion on the Key Themes Worksheet. The assigned team member makes final edits.

- An assigned team member transfers scores from each Item Worksheet to the Score Summary Worksheet. To finalize scoring, the team discusses the selected range determined during a review for each item and whether the range is higher, the same, or lower than at Consensus Review. Also, the team discusses and comes to agreement on the overall process items and results items scoring bands. These determinations are based on results from the findings and their implications on the Item Worksheets. If the team is considering a change in a scoring band, it should discuss the key drivers behind this decision.

Conducting Final Checks

- Clarify and standardize the language of the item comments and the key themes (e.g., names of the applicant and processes).
- Eliminate any conflicts between strengths and OFIs both within and between items and key themes.
- Ensure that all comments conform to the Comment Guidelines (e.g., avoid jargon, prescriptive sentences, and negative tone; include specific examples and figure references; focus on the Criteria questions).
- Verify that all statements such as "it is not clear," "it does not appear that" and "it is not evident" are changed to reflect the site visit findings.
- CCE retains an electronic copy of the scorebook and the team's signature page.

Checking and Refining Comments in the Site Visit Scorebook

- The team leader may make additional edits after the site visit.
- After the site visit has been completed the team leader prepares for the Judges' Meeting. The team leader reviews the report for significant corrections and clarifications.
- After the Judges' Meeting, the team leader may be asked to make additional edits.

Final Site Visit Report

This is due to the Lead Judge and CCE Office by ***December 22***. The final Site Visit Report includes:

- The Site Visit Issues Worksheets (process and results):
- A Site Visit Scorebook
- A Scoring Summary; and
- A completed award recommendation presentation for the Judges meeting, using the program template.

The Site Visit Report provides the CAPE Panel of Judges with the team's findings, which they will review and discuss during the Judges' Meeting.

Judges' Meeting

The purpose of this meeting is for the Panel of Judges to determine the appropriate Eureka Award Level recommendation for applicant organizations.

To prepare for this meeting, the staff liaison will schedule a call between the Lead Judge and Site Visit Team Lead. Ideally, this call should take place before the final Site Visit Report is submitted but at a minimum, it must take place before the Judges meeting. The Lead Judge should not coach the team on how to present the findings from the Site Visit but provide them with feedback on their Site Visit Report, focusing on comment score alignment, and identify any potential questions or issues the Judges might ask of the team.

During the Judges Meeting the Site Visit Team Lead will respond to any questions that the Panel of Judges have on the Site Visit Report. Additionally, the Panel of Judges will seek to understand how well the applicant meets the recommend Eureka Award Level (Bronze, Silver & Gold).

Preparing for Judges Meeting

- Team lead(s) will send their Site Visit Report to CCE.
- CCE will distribute Feedback Report(s) to Judges for review at least one week before the meeting
- Judges will review the Feedback Report(s) and make comments using track changes. Once their review has been completed, they will send their feedback to the Lead Judge for each applicant.

Judges Meeting Overview

Each team lead has 45 minutes for their applicant. They will take about 15-20 minutes to walk through their presentation, and then the remainder of their time will be questions from the Judges. When the Judges are done with the team leader's questions, they will be excused, and then the judges will have a brief discussion. There might be a need to get the team lead back on the phone after the Judges' discussion.

Next Steps

- After the Judges' Meeting, the Lead Judge consolidates and communicates the Judges' comments to the Team Lead for Feedback Report finalization by **3 business days after the Judges' Meeting**
- Team Lead incorporates input and submits to the Lead Judge
- Final Feedback Report reviewed by Lead Judge and turned in by Lead Judge to CCE by **February 2, 2024.**
- Judges Chair and CCE complete final technical edits
- CCE sends a final report to applicants by **February 16, 2024**

Finalizing the Feedback Report

Each Lead Judge and Site Visit Team Lead will have the option of having a call after the Judges Meeting so that the Judge can share the rationale behind the Panel of Judges final decision. The purpose of this call is not to debate the decision but rather to serve as a learning opportunity for the Examiners. A representative from CCE or CAPE Chair should be present for this call.

During their deliberations, the Panel of Judges may identify issues in the final Scorebook. Generally, these issues are focused on comment score alignment. If this is the case, the Lead Judge for that team will communicate this feedback, and have the team reflect the changes within the Scorebook. Once the team is done, they will submit the Scorebook to the Lead Judge for a final review.

The Lead Judge is responsible for a final review of the Scorebook after the team has finished it to ensure that the comments are criteria based, conform to comment guidelines, make sense and are of value to the applicant. The Lead Judge will also look for consistency among comments and scores. If the Lead Judge identifies changes should be made, they should communicate with the Site Visit Team Lead to discuss those changes. The Lead Judge should not make any changes without discussion and agreement from the team. ***However, the team must incorporate the Judges feedback.*** The Lead Judge may also reach out to other members of the Panel of Judges if they need assistance during this process.

The final updated Scorebook and Scoring Summary should be submitted to the California Council for Excellence by the Site Visit Team Lead. This will be edited, and Quality Award staff will distribute final feedback back to the applicant organization.

Dos and Don'ts for Examiners

Do

- Do try to replicate the spirit of an in-person Site Visit as much as possible. Do not let the fact that you are not there in person significantly affect the process.
- Do have a laptop or computer accessible for the Site Visit and plan on turning on your camera. Do plan on having back-up plans available if technology fails.
- Do exercise common sense when scenarios arise that you have not encountered.
- Do ensure that all actions are consistent with the principles reinforced in the Examiner Code of Conduct.
- Do ask for whatever information is needed to clarify or verify your assigned issues. Ask spontaneous questions. However, be realistic, and do not place undue burden on the applicant by requesting anything unnecessary.
- Do conduct focus groups addressing a span of departments and shifts.
- Do ask questions in easily understood terms and refrain from using Baldrige lingo.
- Do adhere to the agenda items and be prompt for all appointments but be flexible. It is vital for the applicant to feel that there were sufficient opportunities to tell their story.
- Do be alert to any response or lack of response that may affect the team's agenda or approach and communicate that with the team.
- Do take thorough notes for documenting the findings. Note things that will help the applicant via the feedback report and will assist the Judges in understanding the applicant's processes and results. When backing up another Examiner during an interview, offer to take notes for him/her. Remember that it might be distracting for you to type notes while leading an interview.
- Do identify yourself only as an Examiner when working with the applicant.
- Do remember to put yourself on mute when you are not actively speaking to help minimize background noise.
- Do dress in business attire.
- Be prepared for a heavy schedule; expect 12- to 14-hour workdays during your site visit week.
- Do plan to be present for entire site visit. Everyone must remain through the completion and signing of the Site Visit Scorebook.

Do Not

- Do not disclose any personal information beyond your first and last name; this includes not disclosing the name or information about your own organization or your professional qualifications or information.
- Do not interview patients or families.
- Do not interview corporate staff. Note that corporate staff are not allowed to participate in the Site Visit process. They can sit in during the opening and closing meetings but cannot be present during interviews.
- Do not comment or provide feedback to staff during the Site Visit.
- Do not contact the applicant directly; all direct contact should go through the team lead or staff liaison.
- Do not discuss any of the following with the applicant:
    - Personal or team observations, findings, conclusions, or decisions, whether in a critical or complimentary way.
    - Practices, observations, or information about other applicants.
- Do not give verbal or nonverbal feedback during interviews. Do not let the applicant's representatives know your evaluation of their answers.
- Do not interact with the applicant after the site visit is completed.

Example Focus Group Questions

Examiners should first establish context by asking the individuals about their roles in the organization. *In what part of the organization do each of you work? How long have each of you been with the organization? How long have each of you been in your current position?* From there, Examiners can ask additional questions; try to ask questions you feel are most appropriate for your applicant. **Make sure to give each individual in the focus group an opportunity to respond.** A list of sample questions are as follows:

- What are the most significant changes you have personally experienced in the last two to three years? Why?
- Do you have direct interactions with your customers and/or stakeholders? How often? Could you describe a couple of examples of these interactions? In general, do you know what your customers and/or stakeholders expect from you?
- What departments or groups do you depend on to do your job? How is the work allocated to you? Do you provide these groups feedback on what improvements could be made? How often? How (formal/informal feedback)?
- Are you involved in community activities? Do these involve time off from work? Does the organization allow you time or pay you while you volunteer?
- Are you involved in improvement efforts? Does your leadership ask you for ideas about how they can improve? Do you know of any examples where something was implemented as the result of an employee suggestion?
- Are you currently participating on any work teams? How long have you been a member? What is your team currently working on? Are your team activities worth the time you spend? Why?
- How do you share information with others or receive information from others to help you do your job?
- When was the last time you attended a formal training class? Topic? Length? What knowledge from the training were you able to use back on your job?
- Do you receive information about the organization's key strategic objectives? How (e-mail, newsletters, group meetings, etc.)? Which method is most effective? Are there other ways you would like to get information and/or other information you would like to have?
- Do you receive information on key organizational results? How do you use this information to make decisions?
- How often do you see your direct supervisor? His or her supervisor? His or her supervisor? Under what circumstances?
- Who are your major competitors? What do they do better than you? Are you aware of any efforts to improve in these areas?
- How does what you do align with the organization's mission, vision, and/or values?
- Who are your major competitors? What do they do better than you? Are you aware of any efforts to improve in these areas?
- How do you fit into the organization's strategic plan?

Highest-Ranking Official (HRO) Interview Form

Instructions:

1. Team Lead **must** specifically ask the due diligence questions below, as applicable to the organization. Questions are asked of the applicant's Highest-Ranking Official.
2. Team Lead completes form immediately following the interview to document all findings.
3. If the Team Lead discovers any issues during its HRO interview, they should gather all pertinent information and discuss the issue immediately with the assigned Lead Judge. The Lead Judge shall provide guidance as needed, to appropriately address the issue in the Feedback Report.
4. Team Lead submits a copy of the completed form to Lead Judge/CCE as part of the Site Visit Scorebook.

Applicant #:	**Team Leader:**
Question	**Comments**
1. What has been, or continues to be, the greatest struggle in achieving organizational excellence?	
2. Are there any major changes, organizational or other, that have occurred since the application was submitted? What, if any, major changes do you expect over the next several years?	
3. Are there any pending sanctions or lawsuits against the organization or its executives?	
4. What (if applicable) is the status of your union contracts?	
5. What (if applicable) fines has your organization been assessed in the last two years?	
6. For public or publicly funded organizations (i.e., government or non-profit that receive public funds), ask: are any formal complaints or grievances filed with the local, state, or federal governing agency, open or pending?	
7. Are there any audit or monitoring findings that are currently unresolved?	
8. Are there any external investigations occurring in your organization?	
9. If your organization were to be selected as an award recipient, can you think of anything that might cause embarrassment to the CAPE program or yourself?	
10. Are there any issues that you think we may see that you wish to explain?	
11. Is there anything else we should know about your organization?	