CAPE Eureka Award
for Performance Excellence
Site Visit Guidelines for Applicants

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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 on 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

What is the one deliverable of the site visit process?

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 provided to the CAPE Judges' Panel so that they can make accurate decisions about whether to recommend the applicant for the Award. **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 location 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.

Site Visit Process Timeline 2023

November 20 - December 9
Examiners and Applicants prepare for Site Visits

December 10 - 15
Site Visits are Conducted

Mid-January
CAPE Judges Meeting

One Week After Judges Meeting
Award Recipient Notification

Mid-February
Feedback Reports Distributed to Applicants

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 Review Fee

Site visit expenses for applicants usually range between $10,000 - $15,000, depending on the size of the examination team and location of the site visit. Applicants will be invoiced for a site visit deposit based on the projected overall site visit expense prior to the site visit. The deposit is due prior to the site visit week and is used to assist the examiners with their upfront travel expenses.

The fee is based on actual costs incurred by the examiners who conduct the site visit and may include travel, lodging, meals, car rental, and conference room rental at the team's hotel. It is possible that a team may be required to travel outside of California to evaluate an applicant's facility. The decision to examine a facility outside of California depends on several factors including: (1) the percentage of the applicant's business conducted in those facilities, and (2) the percentage of employees stationed in those facilities.

Site Visit Deposit

Applicants who can make the hotel arrangements directly for the examination team (preferred) will be billed a site visit deposit of **$8,500.00.** If the applicant does not receive a site visit, the full amount of the deposit will be refunded.

If your organization is not able to make hotel arrangements for the examination team, contact CCE immediately so additional expenses can be added to the site visit deposit amount to cover lodging.

Applicant Responsibilities

Employees from the applicant organization are an integral part of the site visit process. Participants from the applicant organization should include: a point of contact for the site visit, members of the senior leadership team (as defined by the applicant), as well as individuals who will be interviewed or involved in data collection or presentation.

The responsibilities of these participants are described below:

Applicant Point-of-Contact

- Serve as a primary contact person during the site visit and address issues that may arise
- Coordinate the site visit agenda with the Team Lead (TL) and CCE
- Meet briefly with the TL at the end of each day to discuss any potential changes to the agenda
- Review the applicant preparation guidelines (in this document) and ensure that they are distributed to staff
- Ensure that requested staff members are made available for interviews when scheduled and provide information when requested
- Ensure requested documents and data are provided, including updated Category 7 results, when applicable/available. Work with CCE staff to determine the best method of sharing these materials electronically
- Arrange for appropriate computer, audio, video, and room setup details to facilitate a smooth site visit (if needed)
- Prepare for opening and closing meeting presentation

Senior Leadership Team (as defined in the application)

- Participate in the opening and closing meetings
- Participate in interviews with members of the examination team when identified on the agenda

Front Line Staff

- Participate in interviews with members of the examination team when identified on the agenda
- Participate in focus group interviews with the examination team

Preparing for Site Visit

Applicant

The following is a list of key activities that need to be completed before the Site Visit:

- Work with the CCE to confirm dates for the Site Visit.
- Discuss logistics for the Site Visit, including utilization of video calls (if needed). Share any technology limitations that you might have.
- Review the Applicant Site Visit Preparation Guidelines with staff.
- The Site Visit team will request a set of documents that should be available to the Site Visit team prior to the Site Visit. This request will be made via a Document Request form that you will receive from the Team Lead. Please do not create any documents or new data files. Just let the team know if you do not have the document/data.
- Review and provide feedback on the Site Visit agenda.
- Share which staff members will be participating in each interview.
- Help identify front-line staff that will be taking part in each of the focus groups.
- Participate in calls with CCE staff and Site Visit Team Leader as needed.
- Let CCE know if you have additional questions about the Site Visit Process.

Site Visit

Hotel Selection

The Applicant is responsible for making hotel arrangements for the Examination Team via direct billing, including a conference room and room service. Please contact CCE right away if your organization is not able to pay directly for hotel arrangements.

Hotel Requirements:

- Distance from Hotel to Applicant Site: The hotel should be near the applicant's main location provided it meets all the other requirements.

Conference Room Requirements:

- Standard Setup:
  - The conference room must be at a minimum of 800 square feet (not including any storage space that might be attached to the meeting room). There should be approximately 8 square feet per person at each table. Each member needs enough room to spread out their materials and work comfortably. While team sizes vary, plan on 8 members.
  - The individual making the arrangements will verify with the hotel contact that the meeting space is well-lit.
  - The room should be large enough for team members to eat meals away from the work area.
  - Two additional tables are needed: one for snacks/refreshments, and the second one serves as a "business center" (large enough to hold a printer and miscellaneous supplies).
  - Internet access is required.
- Security: The team conference room needs to be secured 24 hours per day. Keys are available for the Team Lead. If more keys are available through the hotel, other team members may also have keys.
- Supplies:
  - Wireless Printer
  - Shredder
  - CCE and the Lead Senior will coordinate any additional supplies with OPC
- Miscellaneous:
  - Conference rooms should be reserved Sunday through Saturday, in case the team is not finished with the site visit scorebook by Friday. When the conference room is reserved, the individual making the

arrangements will notify the hotel that the room may not be used on Saturday and ask for the deadline to notify the hotel without penalties.

On-site

Work Room Requirements: These requirements are similar to those of the hotel workroom (please see "Standard Setup" above). The security of the on-site workroom is imperative. This room cannot be accessed by anyone other than the examination team members.

Food and Beverage

Examiners will be responsible for the cost of any meals not provided by the applicant. Itemized receipts will be required for reimbursement. Breakfast may be provided on-site by the applicant or the hotel. It is preferred that the applicant provide lunch for the team in their on-site workroom, as well as coffee, water, and snacks throughout the day. Any special requests should be submitted by the team in advance. If the applicant has established direct billing with the examination team's hotel, any room service or hotel restaurant bills can be charged to the master bill (with prior approval from the applicant). Examiners will also be reimbursed for snacks. The Lead Senior may buy snacks and drinks ahead of time for the hotel workroom, which is also reimbursable. There is absolutely no alcohol permitted during the site visit.

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 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.

Highest-Ranking Official (HRO) Interview

Before the Site Visit, the Team Leader and a Senior Examiner/or a CCE Staff 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, that 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. Highest-Ranking Official questions are provided on page 11.

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 the 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 (The Applicant should place any documents requested during Site Visit in this folder)
- Interview Logs (The Applicant will be asked to keep track of those who participate in interviews and upload the document into this folder)

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.**

Applicant Site Visit Preparation Guidelines

These guidelines are provided to help applicants better understand and prepare for the Site Visit process. The applicant point-of-contact should review these guidelines.

- Examiners may not share personal information about themselves, their background, or the organizations with which they are affiliated.
- The Site Visit Team Leader will request interviews with Category leaders and other responsible parties throughout the Site Visit.
- Interview participation should be limited to staff with direct involvement in that category or item under discussion.
- The Site Visit Team will interview employees from all shifts, if applicable, and all departments. The applicant should inform the Site Visit Team of the most appropriate times to interview individuals on different shifts.
- Some staff may need to be called in or stay over briefly for an interview. You will be given advance notice so that it can be arranged.
- Front-line staff will be questioned relative to their expected knowledge and involvement based on information contained within the application. Interviewees will not be expected to quote from the application. These interactions will take place via focus groups.
- All interviews and statements are confidential. Examiners will take notes during interviews; these notes are for Examiner reference to ensure they retain the information that is provided. No answers will be specifically attributed to a person.
- The purpose of the questions asked by the Site Visit Team is to verify and clarify information within the application. Not all questions are related to Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs); many are to validate the strengths of the organization.

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 the 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?	