

## Considerations for Subunits

### What is a subunit?

A subunit is an organization that is a subsidiary, division, or unit of a larger parent organization or system, and/or that is controlled, administered, and/or owned by a larger parent organization or system.

### How does my examiner team know that the Award applicant it is evaluating is a subunit?

Award applicants state whether or not they are subunits in the Eligibility Certification Form found at the beginning of the award application you receive.

In this form, applicants are also asked to supply an organization chart showing their relationship to the parent, describe how the subunit relates to the parent and other subunits, and describe the major functions the parent or its other subunits provide to the subunit.

### With regard to the Criteria, how is a subunit different from an organization that is not a subunit?

Fundamentally, there is no difference. All Award applicants must be able to respond to, and are evaluated against, all seven Criteria categories.

However, an important key factor for a subunit is the array of approaches provided by the parent. These might be listed in the Eligibility Certification Form, described in the application, or both. Examples are approaches for strategic planning, business acquisition, research and development, facilities management, data gathering and analysis, human resource services, legal services, finance or accounting, sales/marketing, supply-chain management, global expansion, information and knowledge management, education/training programs, information systems and technology services, curriculum and instruction, and academic program coordination/development.

Subunits have varying degrees of autonomy in how they use these approaches.

### How should my examiner team evaluate approaches used by the applicant/subunit but created, mandated, or managed by the parent?

For any applicant, “respond to the Criteria” means that the organization has and can describe the approaches used to accomplish the intent of the Criteria categories. It does not mean that the organization must have complete independence to determine what and how they carry out those approaches. Subunits are not exempted from particular requirements just because they are subunits. This may mean that your team needs to request more information on certain parent driven approaches during a site visit.

### Your team should also keep the applicant’s/subunit’s degree of autonomy in mind.

**Criticality** of the feedback is one consideration. For example, if a parent-mandated approach is a strength that promotes the subunit’s sustainability, writing a strength comment is appropriate. Conversely, if a parent-mandated approach presents a significant vulnerability that may prevent the subunit from reaching its goals, it is appropriate to write an opportunity for improvement comment.

**Actionability** of the feedback is another consideration. For example, feedback might focus on whether the subunit has an approach for executing the parent’s approach, as appropriate; on the deployment of the parent’s approach; on learning with regard to the approach, within the allowable parameters; or on the alignment or integration of the parent’s approach with other approaches and with the subunit’s key goals.

In writing comments related to either of these considerations, your team should **acknowledge that the approach comes from the parent**. As with all applicants, the score should reflect your team’s comments.