Pre-Site Visit Planning Guide

Overview

The planning phase of the site visit begins after the Examiner Team completes the Consensus Review. In this section, planning essentials are addressed.

Contact with the Applicant’ Official Point of Contact (OCP)

After the Team Leader Training, each Team Leader will have made telephonic contact with the applicant’s official point of contact (OCP) to begin the process of establishing when the site visit will occur.

Not later than February 2nd, the Team Leader will have verified with the OCP the exact dates of the site visit. The Team Leader will notify the members of the Examiner Team and OPE.

From the time from the completion of the Consensus Review, the Team Leader will be in contact with the OCP for a number of things – who the team wants to interview, documents that they want to review, logistical requirements for the team (conference room) and other matters.

Note: Only the Team Leader, Assistant Team Leader (as appropriate), and OPE may talk to the OCP. The applicant can identify an alternate OCP who also can communicate with the Team Leader. Communication with the applicant in the planning phase is limited to the OCP and any designated alternate(s).

During the initial call, the Team Leader should provide the following:

- Congratulations for participating in the OPE process
- Team Leader’s name and employer
- Team Leader’s telephone numbers
- Assistant Team Leader’s name and telephone numbers and role
- Discuss the possible week of the site visit (March 9 – April 3)

The Team Leader should discuss/review with the OCP the following:

- The Team Leader, OPE Monitor, and OCP are the only points of contact unless it is necessary for the Assistant Team Leader and/or alternate OCP to communicate.
- Ensure that the Site Listing Descriptors provided in the Application Report is current.
- The primary purpose of the site visit is to verify and clarify the contents of the application.
- The primary products of the process are a report the Judges use to make decisions to recommend Award recipients and a feedback report for the applicant.
The Team Leader should ask the OCP the following:

- Any concerns that the OCP has identified
- Any questions that the OCP has about the process
- What dates and times to schedule future weekly telephone conversations

The Team Leader may follow up a number of things in a subsequent email. Early on, send the OCP a copy of the Applicant Guidelines found on the Examiner Learning Resource Center on the OPE website.

Establish Ongoing Communication With the Applicant

During the regularly scheduled weekly calls with the OCP, obtain further information for planning the site visit. These weekly calls also serve to help the OCP understand the Site Visit Review process and to provide the opportunity for the OCP to ask questions.

Ongoing Communication with the OCP

Early in the planning process

- Review the opening and closing meeting processes, including expectations of both the applicant and the Site Visit Team (the templates of the PowerPoint presentations are in the Examiner Learning Resource Center on the OPE web site).
- Provide the OCP with a copy of the Applicant Guidelines that is at the Examiner Learning Resource Center.
- Remind the OCP of the site visit boundaries:
  - In most cases, the Site Visit Team cannot meet with any suppliers or customers/students/patients.
  - Examiners must not accept gifts.
  - No data or documents will be asked for or accepted by the Site Visit Team after the closing meeting.
  - The Team Leader will provide draft Key Themes feedback at the closing meeting.
- Request information on lunch while the team is on-site (to be arranged and provided by the applicant in the employee cafeteria, if available).
- Ask about appropriate clothing for the team to wear while visiting the applicant site(s).
- Confirm the availability of key people during the Site Visit week and ask for a list of the applicant’s points of contact for each of the seven Criteria Categories.
- Discuss the on-site portion of the site visit schedule, which begins with the opening meeting and ends with the closing meeting. To assist the applicant in arranging for the availability of key people for interviews, the Team Leader will provide to the OCP the draft site visit schedule one week before the start of the site visit.
- Prepare a list of documents the team will need to have immediately available.
available in the team room on day one of the on-site portion, and give the list to the OCP at least one week before the start of the site visit. Clarify that the team may request additional documents during the site visit.

- Discuss other team needs, for example,
  - An on-site conference room with non-network printer capability for the team to work during the site visit.
  - Computer projector for the opening and closing meetings.
  - That most interviews will be conducted in the interviewee’s office, but there may be a need for conference rooms for focus group interviews.
  - Site Visit Team access to a copier on-site.
  - Name tags or tent cards for employees who meet with Examiners.
  - Business cards or some form of identification attached to all documents requested.
  - **Clarify that no word-processing or typing assistance for the Site Visit Team is allowed (only a non-networked printer).**

**Develop the Initial Site Visit Schedule (What Sites to Visit)**

In discussion with the OCP and during planning calls with the Site Visit Team, the Team Leader will determine the following to finalize the plan for sites to be visited and to begin work on the daily site visit schedule.

- What operations are conducted and where (e.g., the type and distribution of work and the types of products/services/technologies
- What percentage/type of sales/revenues/budgets or employees/faculty/staff each site represents
- How long the applicant has owned or operated the facility

Provide the inter-site travel plans of the Site Visit Team to the OCP and OPE as soon as possible but no later than two weeks before the start of the visit.

**Note:** The applicant is responsible for providing transportation to and from its locations (if out of town), and the OCP will appreciate as much lead time as possible for arranging this travel.

**Communicate With OPE**

A member of the OPE staff will be attend the at least one day of the site visit. The Team Leader should include OPE in planning efforts and maintain regular contact. OPE should be included in all team communications. The Team Leader should communicate issues with OPE to obtain advice and counsel.

**Communicate With Team**

During the planning phase, the Site Visit Team needs to conduct regular conference calls. These calls are used to keep the team informed, review just-in-time materials, and cover all aspects of the planning activities to
### Members

Ensure that all necessary tasks are being completed by the team members (e.g., determining strategies to close out SVIs, developing SVI Worksheets, and identifying documents and interviewees). The planning that is done before reaching the applicant’s location is essential for ensuring an effective site visit.

### Travel Arrangements

OPE organizes Site Visit Teams to minimize those requiring to stay in hotels during the site visit. Most examiners should be able to commute from home to the applicant’s main site each day.

The Team Leader will discuss with the OCP travel arrangements for any Examiners who will travel to another site (out of town).

Examiners normally will seek reimbursement from their employer. However, some Examiners do not receive such reimbursement, and should seek OPE approval prior to making travel arrangements. OPE will reimburse all Examiners pre-approved, and will obtain reimbursement from the applicant.

The applicant will normally pay directly for lunch for the Site Visit Team. For applicants unable to do this, the Team Leader will arrange with OPE how to cover these expenses.

### Request Information and Materials

There are three times that requests for information and materials from the applicant can be made:

- During weekly conference calls, the Team Leader requests and secures from the OCP materials needed to plan the strategy for the site visit, including:
  - **significant applicant changes** such as site acquisitions, changes in facilities or employee numbers *(please notify OPE of such changes)*
  - **significant updates** to organizational charts
  - **individual facility details**, if applicable, maps of facilities with buildings marked according to activity type, length of ownership or operations, travel time between sites
  - **definition of activities and services provided by the parent**
  - **foreign site information**, if applicable, functions performed, availability of key people and data
  - **safety considerations** for which Examiners need to be prepared and at which sites (e.g., shoes, clothing)
  - **employee information** not included in the application, such as work hours, shifts, and times of shift changes; bargaining unit specifics such as leadership, types and numbers; how to distinguish employees from others in facilities or from contractors (if appropriate)
  - **role of contractors** *(which are generally not interviewed except when the applicant considers them the equivalent as employees — consult with OPE if you have questions)*
At least one week in advance of the site visit, the Team Leader submits to the OCP a list of documents to be available in the team room when the team arrives. This should also include an update of all Results data provided in Category 7 of the Application Report.

During the on-site phase of the site visit, the Team Leader and team members may request additional documents.

Note: After the closing meeting, no further materials or information may be requested.

Ensure You Have Communicated Appropriately

Inform the applicant that:

- Examiners will review updates to charts and graphs from the application and in many cases will review the source documents for the data in the charts and graphs.
- Examiners will address specific site visit issues that require them to verify or clarify the contents of the Application Report. Examiners will not necessarily need to verify everything in the Application Report.

Do not tell the applicant:

- Specific information about team members, such as their professional experience or backgrounds (the applicant receives a team listing from the Team Leader that will include the Examiners’ names and their employers only.)
- Specific site visit issues and Key Themes except those disclosed during the closing meeting.

Ask the applicant to provide

- Time for interviews with people from remote or foreign sites (the Team Leader should identify the person by name, title, or function – these may be done in person, audio or video teleconferencing, or other means).
- Deployment and results information from representative sites not visited (including remote offshore and foreign sites).
Direct, Support, and Mentor the Team

It is the Team Leader’s role to:

- Tell team members when and where they should arrive. Individual travel plans must not adversely affect the team or the evaluation of the applicant.
- Use the Assistant Team Leader to help plan and carry out tasks.
- Develop team assignments and instructions for the site visit. Discuss the plan with team members and OPE.
- Assign team members in pairs. Pairing Examiners who have sector or evaluation experience with those who do not. In addition, gender diversity and experience should be considered.
- Send a copy of all team correspondence to the OPE and ask the team members to do the same.
- Set expectations and develop a work schedule with all team members.
- Remind the team that all materials are confidential.
- Stress to the team that all assigned planning tasks need to be completed before the beginning of the site visit.
- Ensure that all team members are ready, have completed their assignments and have exchanged appropriate materials with each other before the start of the site visit.

Develop a Detailed Draft Site Visit Schedule

To develop a detailed draft on-site agenda:

- Decide the number of days and the dates to be spent with the applicant on-site. Coordinate with OPE.
- Determine the numbers and types of employees to interview, so that you can ensure that the team can adequately assess maturity, deployment, and consistency.
- Select sufficient and appropriate sites to visit, based on Examiners’ requests documented in their Strategy Tools (i.e., related to their most important site visit issues), balanced by the applicant’s need to experience a thorough evaluation. Fully utilize video or teleconferencing to obtain information and reduce travel. Identify those sites where the team can best verify and clarify important issues. Work with the team to get ideas and buy-in. Identify who goes to other sites.
- Identify when to hold conference calls. Notify OCP to arrange for the ability to hold conference calls with these Examiners at other sites.
- Develop the multi-day schedule that you will provide to the OCP one week in advance. Although it must remain flexible, having an initial plan will save time as the site visit evolves.
Conduct the Second Planning Call prior to the Site Visit

The second planning meeting occurs about one to two weeks prior to the site visit. The following actions need to be completed before the end of the planning meeting.

- Refine the team’s strategy to address SVIs, as appropriate.
- Refine the site visit schedule, knowing it may change as the site visit unfolds.
- Discuss demeanor, interview skills, and wording of questions for site visit interviews. Remind team members to respect the applicant’s culture and environment, including behavior and dress code.
- Explain a conservative approach for requesting information and materials (i.e., ask the applicant to find the specific information in question rather than the Examiner taking it back to the team conference room to review).
- Inform team members that they should ask the document owner to mark or attach his/her business card to any materials they take and that they are responsible for tracking these materials and returning them to the Assistant Team Leader.
- On an ongoing basis, each Item Lead should prepare a list of specific requests for the applicant’s senior executives and Category counterparts and give this list to the Team Leader. Requests typically include additional documents, data, and people to interview. This provides the team the opportunity to request other documents and data that are necessary.

Ongoing lists are in addition to the list of documents that were requested in advance of the site visit.

- Finalize the walk-around questions that the team developed to test deployment of the various approaches identified in the SVIs. This step will ensure that the team is clear on what questions will be asked when.
- Prepare questions and describe the process the team will use during the team interview with the applicant’s senior leaders and category leads after the opening meeting.
- Offline, the Team Leader will prepare for the meeting with the HRO.
Guidelines for Determining
Team Size and Length of the
On-Site Phase of the Site Visit

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<th>Applicant Size</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Small (2 – 50 employees)</td>
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<td>Medium (51 – 250 employees)</td>
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<td>*2.5 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large (more than 250 employees)</td>
<td>7 team members</td>
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*The length of time shown is the average time spent with the applicant (i.e., the on-site portion of the site visit) and does not include time for finalizing the Site Visit Scorebook (takes about half to one day to complete).