The National Quality Institute is an independent, not-for-profit organization. We are committed to enhancing Canada’s national well-being and global leadership through the adoption of quality principles and practices in all sectors of our economy.

We promote awareness and education of quality principles and practices, and recognize excellence through the Canada Awards for Excellence program. We provide continuous improvement tools and training courses, Organizational Quality Assessments, and administer the Canada Awards for Excellence program. We also act as the Canadian body for ISO 9000 series Quality Management System Auditor Certification. We are responsible for Canada’s Quality Month, and team with other quality organizations to encourage education and adoption of quality practices. Together with our Strategic Partners we are dedicated to inspiring and fostering excellence.

The National Quality Institute is a member of the World Quality Council and IATCA (International Auditor Training & Certification Association). The Board of Governors of the National Quality Institute comprises a diverse group of leaders in all sectors from across Canada. We participate in the determination of quality standards in Canada and around the world.

Also available from the National Quality Institute are the Quality Fitness Test for the Public Sector — a self-assessment workbook based on the Criteria and specifically designed for public service organizations — and training courses to assist with interpretation and implementation of the Criteria in the public sector. For more information about the Institute, our products and services, or the Canada Awards for Excellence, please contact us at:

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Achieving Citizen/Client-Focused Service Delivery: A Framework for Effective Public Service Organizations

The National Quality Institute (NQI) developed the Canadian Quality Criteria for the Public Sector with assistance from professionals from across the public service. The Criteria serves as a framework for effective public service organizations and agencies at all levels, including government departments, schools and school boards, hospitals, police forces, etc. This public sector Criteria is based on the NQI’s original Canadian Quality Criteria. Copyrighted to the Institute, the Canadian Quality Criteria is recognized around the world and used by organizations in all sectors across Canada. As part of our extensive research for the development of the Criteria, we investigated the workings of successful organizations across all sectors.

The Canadian Quality Criteria for the Public Sector is a comprehensive and practical framework for improvement and achieving effective citizen/client-focused service or product delivery. It is founded on the Quality Principles. It also serves as the basis for adjudication of the public sector Quality Awards, under the banner of the Canada Awards for Excellence program; the Canada Awards for Excellence are Canada’s own awards for recognizing outstanding achievement.

More and more government, education, health care and other public sector organizations are putting the Criteria into action and discovering the power of continuous improvement. Organizations everywhere are becoming increasingly aware of the high cost of poor quality.

The key to achieving desired results is to use the total “Framework” of Criteria as a roadmap for Quality Improvements, with Section Seven - Organizational Performance in the Criteria identifying outcomes from the efforts made to improve and sustain improvements in citizen/client-focused service delivery. (For ease of use, the generic term “organization” has been used throughout the Criteria; if the term is not commonly used within your structure, simply think of it in the normal way you describe your organization, for example: department or agency.)

Organizational excellence in the public sector can benefit all Canadians. By employing the Canadian Quality Criteria for the Public Sector, and following our Quality Compass to excellence, you and your organization will be setting the standard for world-class quality in public service.
1. **SECTION ONE - LEADERSHIP**

This section focuses on those who have primary responsibility and accountability for the organization's performance, usually referred to as senior management. Good leadership is based on a foundation of ethics and values that reflect quality principles.

1.1 **Strategic direction**

a. A mission and mandate statement is in place and has been communicated to all levels in the organization.

b. Key success factors and priorities have been determined and are linked to strategic direction, for example the accountability framework for the organization.

c. Strategic planning incorporates ambitious objectives necessary to achieve the mission and mandate, and is communicated to all levels in the organization.

d. Implementation of strategic planning is monitored and reviewed.

1.2 **Leadership involvement**

a. The senior management team demonstrates a commitment to quality improvement, for example, through direct involvement in improvement initiatives.

b. The senior management team works together to reduce barriers between functions, and promote teamwork and open communications.

c. Responsibility, accountability and leadership for improvement are shared throughout the organization.

d. Reward and recognition for senior management are linked to quality principles.

e. Responsibility to society in general is considered in the decision-making processes.

f. Ideas and practices on quality improvement are shared internally, with other public service organizations and sectors.

1.3 **Results of leadership actions**

a. Indicators of effectiveness of leadership in setting strategic direction and demonstrating leadership in the quality principles.

b. Indicators of the level of understanding in the organization, of the mission, mandate and strategic direction.

c. Extent of direct involvement by senior management in the implementation of quality principles and in improvement initiatives.

d. Extent to which shared leadership on quality is demonstrated throughout the organization.

e. Extent of senior management involvement in sharing ideas and quality practices internally, and with other public service organizations and sectors.

1.4 **Continuous improvement**

a. The organization evaluates and works at improving its approach to leadership.

2. **SECTION TWO - PLANNING**

This section examines the planning process in regards to the linkage of planning to strategic direction/intent, in regards to improvement and the measurement of performance to assess progress.

2.1 **Development and content of improvement plan**

a. Improvement planning is derived from overall strategic direction (links to 1.1(c)).

b. Key improvement issues have been identified, prioritized, measured and improvement goals set, including any actions regarding external partnering arrangements for the delivery of client services.

c. The improvement plan has been communicated inside and outside the organization, and is monitored and reviewed.

2.2 **Assessment**

a. Formal assessments, using criteria that reflect quality principles, are conducted to determine the organization's strengths and opportunities for improvement.

b. The organization analyzes assessment findings to help determine priorities for improvement.

2.3 **Results of actions through improvement planning**

a. Indicators of the degree of understanding, throughout the organization, of the priorities and goals established in the improvement plan.

b. Indicators of effective implementation of the improvement plan throughout the organization.
3.1 Voice of the client/stakeholder
   a. Clients/stakeholders and/or client groups have been defined.
   b. Information is gathered, analyzed and evaluated to determine client/stakeholder needs, including evaluation of potential partnering and/or third party service delivery arrangements.
   c. The future needs of current and potential clients are gathered and used.

3.2 Management of client/stakeholder relationships
   a. There is full consensus, throughout the organization, on the importance of meeting documented service standards, and of achieving client/stakeholder satisfaction.
   b. There are methods and processes in place that make it easy for clients/stakeholders to provide input on their needs, seek assistance and complain.
   c. The organization responds to client/stakeholder inquiries and complaints promptly and effectively.
   d. The organization has developed a good level of client/stakeholder confidence in its services and/or products provided, through meeting service delivery standards and/or product specifications.

3.3 Measurement of client/stakeholder satisfaction
   a. The organization measures client/stakeholder satisfaction to gain information for improvement.

3.4 Results of actions on citizen/client focus
   a. Levels and trends of performance in dealing with client/stakeholder inquiries and complaints compared to established service delivery standards.

3.5 Continuous improvement
   a. The organization evaluates and works at improving its approach to citizen/client focus.

4.1 Human resource planning
   a. Human resource planning supports the organization’s goals and objectives.
   b. There are methods in place to recruit, select and manage the performance of people, and steps are taken to minimize any detrimental effects of restructuring.

4.2 Participatory environment
   a. The organization ensures that people, at all levels, understand the strategic direction and the improvement plan, and are committed to achieving its goals and purpose.
   b. People are involved in improvement initiatives.
   c. People’s suggestions and ideas are encouraged and implemented.
This section examines how work is organized to support the organization's strategic direction, with a focus on the management of key processes as well as continuous improvement. Process management applies to all activities within the organization, in particular to "key" processes; those that are critical for success and normally have a major impact on meeting citizen/client needs. Process improvement priorities are derived from goals established within the improvement plan. Processes are value-adding transformations involving people and other resources such as materials and information. Processes may be of two basic types: service related or product related. Service processes include data and information, and the expertise to transform them into value for the client. Product related processes include the raw materials and expertise from various functions to manufacture the product. Other factors include customer requirements, measurement data, team effectiveness, levels of individual knowledge and skills, leadership, training and development etc. It is important to focus on the key processes and to simplify and prioritize these processes as they relate to the primary mission of the organization. It is these key processes that need to be continually analyzed and improved.

5.1 Process definition
a. Key processes capable of delivering services and/or products that meet client needs, are designed and documented.

5.2 Process control
a. Key processes are monitored to ensure consistency in services and/or products provided.
b. Problems are analyzed, root causes identified, and actions taken to prevent recurrence.

5.3 Continuous learning
a. The organization determines training and development needs to meet goals in the improvement plan, and responds to these needs.
b. The organization evaluates the effectiveness of training and development programs.
c. The organization encourages people to widen and/or expand their individual skills.

5.4 Employee satisfaction
a. The organization measures people satisfaction at all levels, and links the feedback to future improvement opportunities.
b. The organization identifies the contribution of its people, and links recognition to the quality principles and quality improvement objectives in the organization.

5.5 Results of actions from a focus on people
a. Indicators of the effectiveness of training and education, in particular in the area of quality improvement principles and methods.
b. Indicators of involvement levels in improvement activities that link directly to the goals and objectives of the organization.
c. Indicators of awareness and involvement in addressing issues related to well being, for example, health, safety and environmental concerns.
d. Levels and trends of employee suggestions and ideas submitted, and implemented.
e. Levels and trends in employee turnover rates, absenteeism and grievances.

5.6 Continuous improvement
a. The organization evaluates and works on improving its focus on people.
SECTION SIX - SUPPLIER/PARTNER FOCUS

5.3 Process improvement
a. Key processes are analyzed to determine opportunities for continuous improvement, through incremental refinement and/or fundamental redesign, including potential for reallocation of service delivery.
b. Process improvements are implemented and monitored, and all changes are documented to ensure consistency in service delivery and/or products provided.
c. Clients and suppliers are involved in continuous improvement activity, for example in problem-solving and improvement teams.
d. External information is gathered and used to compare performance and to identify opportunities/ideas for improvement.

5.4 Results of actions in Process Management
a. Indicators of the effectiveness of the design process for new services and/or products, such as cycle times and frequency of process design changes.
b. Levels and trends in process capability and cycle time for key service delivery and/or production processes.

5.5 Continuous improvement
a. The organization evaluates and works on improving its approach to process management.

6.1 Partnering
a. The organization selects capable suppliers/service providers through the use of appropriate information and criteria.
b. The organization establishes cooperative working relationships with key suppliers/service providers, and encourages innovation to assure and improve the quality of services and products.
c. The organization shares information with its key suppliers/service providers to help them improve.
d. The organization involves its key suppliers/service providers in the development of new services and/or products.

6.2 Results of actions in Supplier Focus
a. Levels and trends of suppliers/service providers in their process capabilities and cycle times.
b. Levels and trends in the quality and value of provided services and/or products.
c. Extent of involvement of suppliers/service providers in new services and/or product planning and development.

6.3 Continuous improvement
a. The organization evaluates and works on improving its focus on suppliers/partners.

SECTION SEVEN - ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

7.1 Service/product quality
a. Levels and trends of the quality of services and/or products provided, for example attainment of service standards and/or product specifications, and indicators of reliability, error rates response times, etc.

7.2 Organization results
a. Levels and trends in overall performance accomplishments and measures of program outcomes, i.e., the actual impact of the organization's actions.

7.3 Client/stakeholder satisfaction
a. Levels and trends in client/stakeholder satisfaction.
b. Levels and trends in client/stakeholder confidence.
c. Levels and trends in client reach.

7.4 Employee satisfaction and morale
a. Levels and trends in employee satisfaction and morale.

7.5 Financial performance
a. Levels and trends in measures of overall financial performance (i.e., adherence to budgets, expenditure management, revenues management, cost reduction/control, asset management).
Excellence

These Quality Principles form the foundation for long-term quality improvement and permeate the Canadian Quality Criteria.

Cooperation, teamwork and partnering
Teamwork is nurtured and recognized. Co-operation, within and between public service organizations and inside and outside sector borders is a cornerstone for the development of win-win relationships.

Leadership through involvement and by example
Developing a quality approach involves transforming both thinking and behavior. This can only be achieved if the management is actively involved in facilitating, reinforcing and leading the changes necessary for improvement.

Primary focus on clients/stakeholders
To achieve goals, the primary aim of everyone must be to fully understand, meet and strive to exceed the needs of clients and stakeholders.

Respect for the individual and encouragement for people to develop their full potential
Critical for quality improvement are the values that foster mutual respect between people who work together; communication and personal development are directly related to these values.

Contribution of each and every individual
Everyone must have the opportunity to use his or her creativity and make a positive contribution to the pursuit of excellence.

Process oriented and prevention-based strategy
Any organization, in any sector, is made up of a network of independent processes, that add value. Improvement is achieved through changing these processes to improve the total system. Managing by focusing purely on results alone is fruitless, since results are determined by the system in use. If the system is not changed in a fundamental way, the results will not improve. To facilitate long-term improvements, a mindset of prevention rather than correction must be applied to eliminate the causes of errors and waste.

Continuous improvements of methods and outcomes
No matter how much improvement has been accomplished, there are always practical ways of doing even better, and of providing improved service delivery or products.

Factual approach to decision making
Decisions are based upon measured data and an understanding of the cause and effect mechanisms at work. They are not simply based on instinct, authority or anecdotal data.

Obligations to stakeholders, including a concern for responsibility to society
An organization is seen as part of society, with important responsibilities to satisfy the expectations of its people and all other stakeholders.
As your journey brings your organization closer to excellence, you may now be ready to receive recognition for your improvements in quality. Apply for the Quality Award of the Canada Awards for Excellence, presented annually by the National Quality Institute.

For an Entry Guide or to order your NQI Quality Fitness Test, please contact the National Quality Institute.