

ACCREDITATION TIPS

SELF-ASSESSMENT MANUAL WRITING THE FOUR-PART ANSWER



The four parts of the self-assessment answer are:

1. Description
2. Appraisal
3. Plan
4. References

The first three parts cover the intent and performance of your program/process, and the fourth part is the support and authentication for the previous parts. Here are some overall tips when writing the four-part answer:

- Be brief, be concise...only write what is needed
- 1 page is the goal (not the rule)
- Do not use first person
- Use a professional/business tone
- Maintain a single writer tone
- Have someone else proofread the responses before submitting
- Resist using slang or proprietary industry terms...remember, any reader should understand what is written
- Use the interpretation guide

A common error in writing performance indicators is not linking key words from the performance statement to the description, appraisal, plan, and even the references. This disconnect leads to descriptions not focusing on what the performance indicator is asking, appraisals being continuations of the descriptions and not establishing a true **evaluation** of what is written in the description and plans not focusing on what is uncovered in the appraisal, stating the **required need**, **modification**, or **update** within a **specific time frame** established by the agency.

The following example utilizes one of the performance indicators peer teams regularly see as an issue with agencies. The example demonstrates how authors of the SAM can connect the verbiage across all four sections of the performance indicator. Having a solid understanding of the performance indicator goes a long way towards writing clearly and concisely. Different colors are used for emphasis, directed towards the definitions provided. The colors demonstrate the word connection across all four sections as each color is represented in each section.

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Performance Indicator

10B.4 A conflict resolution process exists between all external organizations with whom the agency has a defined relationship.

Breaking Down the Performance Statement with Definitions

A conflict resolution process (conflict resolution is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict)

exists (be found, especially in a particular place or situation)

between (indicating a connection or relationship involving two or more parties)

all (whole amount, quantity, or extent of)

external organizations (entities that exist outside of the agency described)

with whom the agency (a business or organization established to provide a particular service)

has a defined relationship (specific to the condition or fact of being related; connection or association).

Description

The ABC Fire Department has an established conflict resolution process as a method to resolve any disagreements between entities the department has a relationship with. The process is outlined in Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) 10A-1, Conflict Resolution, and is incorporated into most external organizations agreements including Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) agreements, Anytown Medical Service (AMS) transport service contract, utility companies, and other private contractor agreements doing business with the department.

Appraisal

The department's conflict resolution process, SOG 10A-1, Conflict Resolution, has been incorporated effectively into all MABAS, AMS, and utility company agreements since 2009. These agreements have been executed as written; the conflict resolution process has not been needed since established, but remains available and current. The conflict resolution process has not been included in civilian organization and some private contractor agreements. In these cases, it could have been beneficial in resolving conflicts with an external private contractor that services fire department equipment. Without such a process, communications went over six months until a resolution was found.

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Plan

The department will annually review SOG 10A-1 during its annual document review process. If an update is needed, external agreement documents containing the SOG will be amended with proper notification made to organizations affected. Working with the department's legal representative, ABCFD will introduce and implement the conflict resolution process to all civilian organizations and private contractors providing services to the fire department by February 1, 2027.

References

Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) 10A-1, Conflict Resolution
Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) Agreement
Anytown Medical Service (AMS) Contract
Civilian Organization Agreement
Private Contract Agreement
ABC Fire Department External Document Review Checklist

Color Code Guide

Conflict resolution process

Exists

Between

All

External organizations

Agency

Defined relationship

Past tense / Evaluative appraisal

Future tense / Plan to modify/update to meet needs as outlined

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Description

- Use Present Tense
- Highlight the specific resource, program, or process
- Answer the underlined words in the performance indicator
- Answer "what is your agency currently doing?"
- Provide just the facts,; no need for historical context

Appraisal

- Use Past Tense
- Evaluate/measure/compare the effectiveness over a time period and outline the evaluative approach used
- Answer "How does your agency know what it's doing is working?"
- Don't be afraid to show it can be done better
- Use date and outcomes; quantitative is better than qualitative

Plan

- Use Future Tense
- Use appraisal information to build the case for the plan
- Answer "What will your agency do to improve, maintain, or sustain?"
- Include a timeline or frequency of review
- Develop outcome as a result of your plan

References

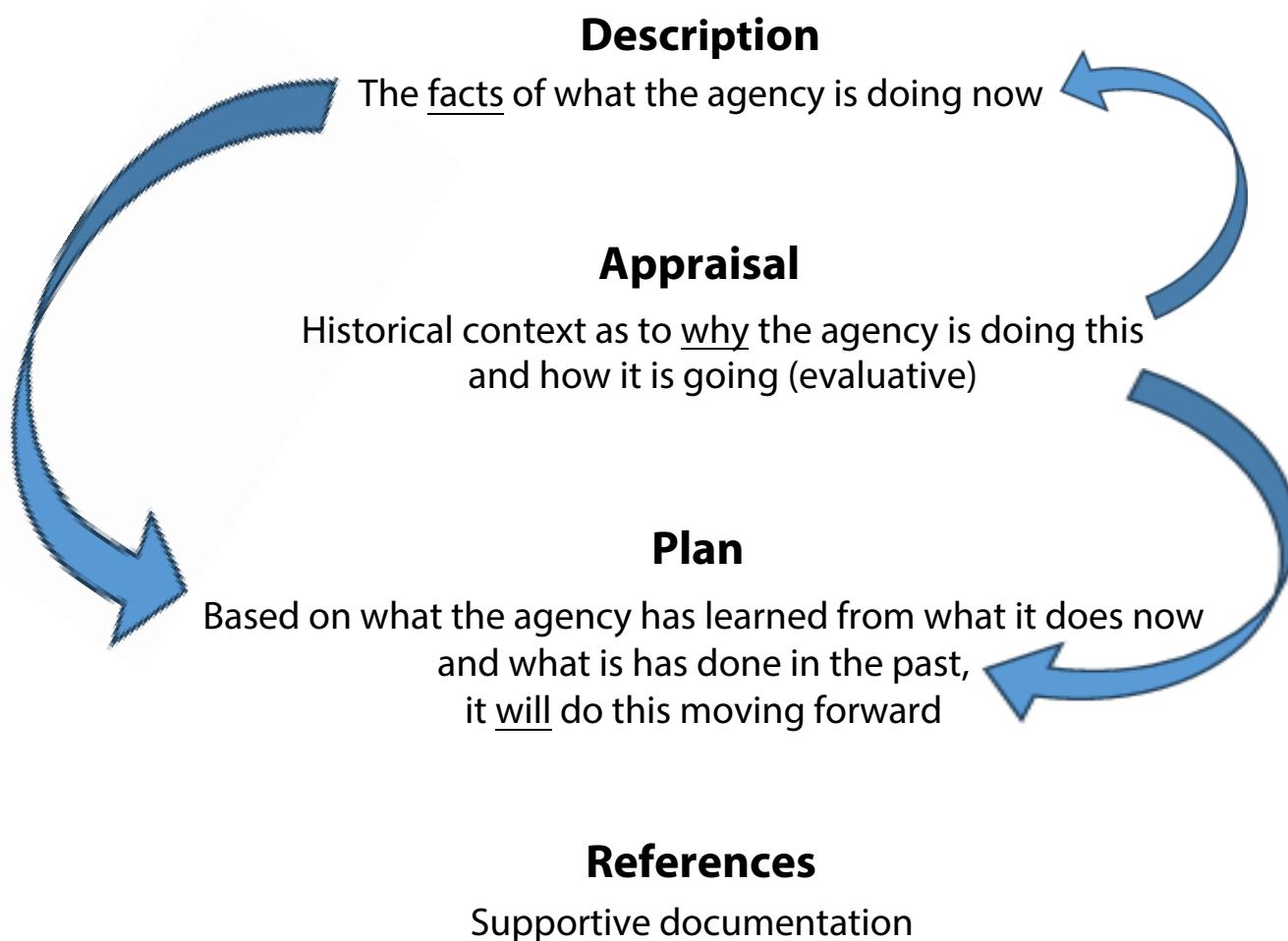
- 2-3 references are sufficient
- Ensure they are current
- Use references to support the description, appraisal, and/or plan
- Point to specific pages if the reference document is large

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The Four-Part Relationship



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