

AMERICAN NATIONAL STANDARD

ASQ/ANSI G1:2021

Guidelines for evaluating the quality of government operations and services

Prepared as an American National Standard by:
ASQ Government Division and ASQ Standards Committee



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CONTENTS

Foreword

Acknowledgments

Introduction to Evaluating Public Agencies

1. Scope and Purpose

1.1 Application

1.2 Limitations

2. Normative References

3. Terms and Definitions

4. Principles of Evaluating Government Performance

5. Maturity Model Definitions

5.1 Maturity Model Structure and Components

5.2 Maturity Levels and their Basis

6. Conducting the Evaluation

6.1 Planning

6.2 Maturity and Effectiveness Analysis

6.3 Maturity and Risk

7. Developing Recommendations and Action Plans

8. Examiner Qualification

Table 5.2 Process Management Maturity Model

Table 5.3 System Management Maturity Model

Table 6.3 Maturity vs. Risk

Foreword

The American Society for Quality, Government Division has developed this standard, based on maturity models first published by Richard E. Mallory, in technical papers and *Quality Standards for Highly Effective Government*¹. This document will be referred to as the Standard for Evaluating the Quality of Government Operations and Services.

For many years the quality assurance community has had a methodology, standards, processes, and reporting tools for commercial products and services, and the necessity for their use is driven by entrepreneurial leadership and a free-market environment. A different approach is needed for evaluating quality systems and processes in government, because of the large differences in the products and services provided, the nature of its leadership, and the practices used for its oversight. For these reasons, this standard has been developed differently and begins with a mandate that supervisors and managers at the front line will take the first steps to create best practice models for their value-creating processes and systems². The development and use of these best practice models will be a continuing responsibility and proof that they are fulfilling their role as managers. Once it is understood that every manager will be held accountable for documenting best practice operational models, then higher-level executives will also be held accountable for aligning and improving the systems that are presented. In this way, leaders at every level of government will be challenged to develop a best practice operations approach, from bottom to top, and to align these processes and systems in an agile and ongoing network of organizational excellence. Because the process and system models presented in this standard have been structured to be evaluated through objective measurements, the models included within it provide for scoring maturity levels and the capability of individual units, and the organization as a whole. These maturity models are predictive in nature since they illustrate the effectiveness of an organization's foundational systems and processes and the resulting level of risk. This standard document provides a methodology for structuring and making visible process and system maturity scoring to provide a benchmark for the effectiveness, capability, and risk of any government agency, program, or office. It also offers a challenge for future improvement in a manner that can be objectively analyzed.

¹ Mallory, Richard E., (2018). *Quality Standards for Highly Effective Government*, 2nd Edition. Taylor and Francis Group.

² These standards are built upon a formal structure for system modeling, that is new to the quality industry. It is fully described in: Structured Systems Management: The Missing Link for Future Quality Practice, Mallory, Richard E. The Quality Management Forum, Summer 2019, v45:2, pg. 8-12. <https://my.asq.org/communities/files/folder/28/44>. It is further described in Mallory, R. (2018) *Lean System Management for Leaders*. Routledge/ Taylor and Francis Group. New York, NY.

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Introduction to Evaluating Public Agencies

Government business operations are unique in that the products and services produced are mandated by laws or regulations without the express purpose of producing direct economic gain for the ‘owners’. There is not generally a single customer because government agencies and divisions are required to meet the demands of a large and diverse set of stakeholders, including the laws themselves. The most immediate of government’s stakeholders are the elected or politically appointed executives who have direct management and accountability for outputs and outcomes. Others are those that provide funding and oversight, such as commissions, legislatures, parliaments, and higher country-level executive agencies. In many, if not most instances, direct feedback from the consumers of the outputs and outcomes are not a major consideration³ unless a significant level of dissatisfaction arises or undesirable events occur. Audits are performed by Inspectors General or budget oversight agencies and are often sponsored by legislators and commissioned when there is a specific concern regarding possible mismanagement of finances or unfair treatment of a constituent group or stakeholder. Such audits are reactive and often generate a defensive or adversarial posture in the audited agencies that may lead to the limited acceptance of non-compliance observations, and rejection of recommendations offered to improve future performance. Because these audits are reactive in nature they are inconsistent with core quality philosophy. Quality in government is provided through efficient and effective delivery of products and services that meet end-user requirements and serve the public good. However, attempting to force improvement through audit recommendations usually does not provide sufficient guidance or incentive for government managers to ensure that systems and processes used are the most effective and efficient.

The ASQ Government Division has estimated less than 20% of all key business processes in state and local government have defined and stable business processes⁴ even though there is a general need for agencies to proactively develop standardized best practice operating methods. Such practices will lead government agencies to develop consistent documented quality processes and systems that will serve as a basis for learning and improvement in the future. They will also ensure the delivery of consistent and uniform products and services, prevent negative performance, and drive a higher value of services provided to stakeholders and the public.

To increase the level of quality in government services the development and use of proactive best practice workflows should be prioritized and incentivized by routine, ongoing internal and external reviews and evaluations, which are based on the maturity models described in this standard. This evaluation standard provides a framework for government entities to achieve success through continual improvement of the key drivers of that success, by using acknowledged successful practices of lean and quality improvement. Specifically, the goals of the standard are:

- 1) to make the presence of quality in government measurable and tangible in every office, branch, and unit.
- 2) to promote alignment to the required and desired objectives of each organization.
- 3) to advance effective management through systems thinking and process standardization.

³ Many government program ‘customers’ are regulated communities, and a positive reaction is not a good guide of the services provided.

⁴ Achievements and Barriers: The Results of Lean Quality Initiatives in Government. A joint research report of the ASQ Government Division and CPS HR Consulting, Sacramento. March, 2017. <https://my.asq.org/communities/files/155/6068>

- 4) to enable uniform assessment across all types of government, and at all levels.
- 5) to incentivize those accountable for organizational outcomes to use and monitor quality management practice.

The standard promotes the achievement of overall organizational objectives through the definition of all important organizational workflows, and the documentation of these best-known management practices for each key workflow through system and process modeling. This is to be done beginning with each front-line supervisor and manager, using system and process mapping. Higher-level executives are asked to define program functions and portfolios and to align all organizational functions using system maps. These system maps will align people, processes, and assets. Primary program outputs or outcomes define the systems and the “aim” or purpose of each. Processes are required for organizational performance by defining a specific chain of activities for defined outputs. By promoting optimization of both systems and processes, this standard provides holistic support of value creation. See Figure 1 below.