

ASSESSMENT OF TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION AND FEDERAL TECHNICAL CAPABILITY PROGRAMS

This document provides guidance and objectives and criteria to support assessments required by DOE O 426.1 *Federal Technical Capability* (FTC), Section 4. *REQUIREMENTS*, paragraph b. *FTC Program Implementation*, subparagraph (7) *Self-Assessment*. This FTC Order paragraph requires self-assessment of **TQP and FTC Program** implementation within one's organization. To ensure effective implementation of the Technical Qualification Programs (TQP), Headquarters and field elements conduct self-assessments of these programs. The Federal Technical Capability Panel (FTCP) also reviews the results of the TQP self-assessments and determines if further action is necessary on a Departmental level. Guidance for structuring assessment teams and assessment reports are presented in Section.1. Assessment objectives and criteria for determining the effectiveness regarding implementation of TQPs and the FTC Program are presented in Sections 2 and 3. The format of the assessment report should follow the format described in DOE O 426.1 Appendix C, Section 4, for Accreditation Self-Evaluation Reports.

1. ASSESSMENT TEAMS/REPORTS

Self-assessments are typically conducted by an internal TQP Assessment Team led by a senior line manager. The results of these assessments are documented in an assessment report that is used by the local organization to determine if improvements are required.

1.1. ASSESSMENT TEAMS.

Assessment teams may consist of people from the organization being assessed, other DOE Headquarters or field elements, and/or independent experts. The number and type of people on assessment teams vary based upon the scope of the assessment. Typically, an assessment team will have a team leader and three to five team members.

- a. Assessment Team Leaders. Choosing the proper assessment team leader is a key element to ensuring a successful assessment. The organization manager selects local assessment team leaders, and the Panel typically selects Departmental assessment team leaders.

- (1) Key attributes of an assessment team leader include the following.

- (a) If internal to the Department, the individual is a senior line manager (GS-15 or above to include equivalent Excepted Service or Senior Level, Excepted Service 4/5) with knowledge of, and experience with, the program being assessed.
- (b) The assessment team leader should be an STSM.

- (c) If external to the Department, the individual is highly respected within the professional community in areas and programs similar to that being assessed.
 - (d) The individual has experience leading an evaluation or project team.
 - (e) The individual, by virtue of reputation, background, and/or experience, will be respected by the organization being assessed.
- (2) The roles and responsibilities of the assessment team leader are as follows.
- (a) Serves as the project manager for all assessment team activities and acts as the primary point-of-contact with the organization being assessed.
 - (b) Has primary responsibility for selecting team members.
 - (c) Coordinates assessment team activities and ensures they are performed in a competent and professional manner.
 - (d) For local assessments, prepares and submits the final report to the office manager, who approves and forwards it to the Panel.
 - (e) For Departmental assessments, prepares and submits the final report to the Panel.

b. Assessment Team Members. Selection of assessment team members is another key element to ensuring a successful assessment. No other task so directly affects the overall quality of the assessment. The following guidelines should be used when selecting team members

- (1) Assessment team members should have technical experience relevant to this assignment and should also have some experience conducting program assessments. This experience provides the background for team members to work independently at an unfamiliar location, gather information quickly, and make objective recommendations.
- (2) The team leader should determine whether any conflict of interest, actual or perceived, exists for any potential team member. If so, that individual should not be considered further.

- (3) Team members should have qualifications that will be respected by the organization requesting the assistance (e.g., reputation, relevant background, and/or types and lengths of experience).

1.2. REPORTING THE RESULTS OF ASSESSMENTS.

To facilitate the review and evaluation of assessment results by the Panel, the results of all assessments should be documented in a consistent manner. The assessment report covers the status of complying with the objectives and criteria listed in this Order. The assessment team leader approves the assessment report. The format of the assessment reports is as follows.

- a. Cover Page. Include the title of the report, the name of the office assessed, and the date of the report.
- b. Executive Summary. Limit this section to one page that provides a short overview of the team composition, dates of the assessment, and methodology. The executive summary should briefly describe assessment results, including strengths and weaknesses.
- c. Introduction. Provide relevant background information and describe the purpose and format of the report.
- d. Scope and Methodology. Describe the make-up of the team in general terms (referring to Attachment A of the report for more detail), describe the scope of the assessment referencing the use of the objectives and criteria, and briefly describe the methodology applied.
- e. Results. Address the overall program and each of the applicable objectives listed in this chapter, describe the status of the effort to achieve the objective, and identify any strengths or weaknesses. Addressing each criterion for the objectives is not necessary; however, any criterion that is not achieved should be identified as a deficiency for that objective.
- f. Attachments. Include the following attachments.
 - Objectives and criteria.
 - List of team leader and team members, including a brief description of their backgrounds and experience.
 - List of people contacted and documents reviewed.
 - Any other information the team deems pertinent.

2. FTCP ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA.

- a. FTC-1, Executive Commitment and Line Management Ownership. Line management is actively involved in all aspects of technical employee recruitment, retention, development, and deployment.

Criteria:

- 1.1 Line managers are aware of the requirements and administrative flexibilities associated with recruiting, hiring, and retaining high-quality technical employees.
- 1.2 Senior line management supports the continuous technical development and improvement of employees.
- 1.3 Supporting Departmental organizations (personnel, training, contracts, finance, etc.) recognize line managers as customers and effectively support them in achieving and maintaining technical excellence.
- 1.4 The applicable Level One or field level Functions, Responsibilities, and Authorities (FRA) Document clearly defines Federal line management responsibilities in the area of technical capability.
- 1.5 Achieving and maintaining technical competence are reflected in the goals and objectives of the organization and the position descriptions and performance evaluation plans of senior managers.
- 1.6 Technical capability programs and processes are institutionalized through Policy, Orders, Standards, and procedures.
- 1.7 Management uses the results of previous FTCP assessments as a tool to improve the program.

- b. FTC-2, Recruiting Technically Capable Personnel. An effective process is implemented to attract highly competent technical personnel to fill key positions in the Department.

Criteria:

- 2.1 Excepted Service Authorities are considered as a tool to attract highly competent technical personnel to fill key safety positions.
- 2.2 Intern programs (or Pathway Programs), such as the Departmental Internship Program, Recent Graduates Program, Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) are recognized as an effective method to attract technically competent personnel to the Department,

consistent with Executive Order 13562, “Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates”..

- c. FTC-3, Staffing and Deployment. Technical staffing plans are developed, maintained, and used as the basis for recruiting, developing, and deploying personnel to ensure that critical safety positions are filled with technically competent people.

Criteria:

- 3.1 Technical staffing plans are developed and maintained to identify critical safety positions and other key technical positions within the organization.
- 3.2 Technical staffing plans form the basis for recruiting, developing, and deploying technical personnel in the organization.
- 3.3 Employees in critical safety positions and other key technical positions possess the requisite education, training, experience, and background for their positions.
- 3.4 The STSM Program is effectively implemented in the organization. The STSM Program within the Technical Qualification Program describes how STSM candidates are selected and compensatory measures used when responsible individuals lack STSM qualification.

- d. FTC-4, Development of Technically Capable Personnel. Programs and processes are effectively implemented to encourage the continuous improvement of technical personnel.

Criteria:

- 4.1 The TQP is effectively implemented. (Note: This program is evaluated using the TQP objectives and criteria.)
- 4.2 Fellowship programs and other continuing education processes are effectively used to enhance the continuous improvement of technical personnel.
- 4.3 Employees are encouraged to join professional organizations, write professional papers, and pursue professional certifications.

- e. FTC-5, Retaining Technically Capable Personnel. DOE is an organization where technically competent personnel are respected and want to work.

Criteria:

- 5.1 Technical personnel are assigned positions and responsibilities that allow them to effectively use their education, training, experience, and background in a fulfilling way.
- 5.2 Career path planning and succession planning are effectively used to help retain technically capable personnel.
- 5.3 Technical performance is used as a basis for performance reviews, promotions, recognitions, rewards, etc.
- 5.4 An effective process is in place to preserve critical technical capabilities during Reduction in Force.

3. TQP ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA.

a. TQP-1, STRUCTURED PROGRAM.

The program clearly identifies and documents the process used to demonstrate employee technical competence.

Criteria:

- 1.1 Senior Management is committed to the TQP.
- 1.2 At minimum, personnel providing management direction or oversight that could impact the safe operation of a defense nuclear facility have been identified as TQP participants.
- 1.3 IDPs, training plans, technical qualification records, or other related documents are updated to reflect the activities required for each individual to satisfy competencies.
- 1.4 A formal evaluation process (e.g., to select and train Qualifying Officials) is in place to objectively measure the technical competency of employees. The rigor of the evaluation process is commensurate with the responsibilities of the position.

Review Approach

A tailored review approach is to be developed for each assessment activity that identifies the specific lines of inquiry, documents and records to be reviewed, personnel to interview, and activities to be observed.

b. TQP-2, PLANS AND PROCEDURES.

Plans and/or procedures are developed and implemented to govern administration of the program.

Criteria:

- 2.1 Written procedures that adequately define the processes and requirements to implement the TQP are in place.
- 2.2 Roles and responsibilities for implementing the TQP are clearly defined and understood by all involved.
- 2.3 The procedures that govern implementation of the TQP are understood by all involved and are being implemented as written.
- 2.4 A training and qualification records development and maintenance process is established for each employee in the TQP.

Review Approach

A tailored review approach is to be developed for each assessment activity that identifies the specific lines of inquiry, documents and records to be reviewed, personnel to interview, and activities to be observed.

c. TQP-3, COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS .

Competency requirements are clearly defined and consistent with applicable DOE standards for similar industrial occupations.

Criteria:

- 3.1 Competency requirements include clearly defined knowledge, skill, and ability elements.
- 3.2 Recognized experts help establish competency requirements.
- 3.3 Related professional accreditation requirements are considered in the program as applicable.
- 3.4 Competency requirements are identified in the areas listed below.
(Note: this does not imply that three separate documents are required.)

- Basic Technical Knowledge. Competency in areas such as radiation protection, occupational safety, chemical safety, nuclear safety, and environmental regulations.
- Technical Discipline Competency. Competency in a technical discipline (e.g., mechanical engineering, chemical engineering) that can be demonstrated by education, professional accreditation, examination, or on-the-job performance.
- Position Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities. Competencies specific to the position, facility, or program and the office.

Review Approach

A tailored review approach is to be developed for each assessment activity that identifies the specific lines of inquiry, documents and records to be reviewed, personnel to interview, and activities to be observed.

d. TQP-4, QUALIFICATION TAILORED TO WORK ACTIVITIES.

The program identifies unique Department- and position-specific work activities and specifies the knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish that work.

Criteria:

- 4.1 An analysis has been performed to identify the related knowledge, skill, and ability elements to accomplish the duties and responsibilities for each TQP functional area or position.
- 4.2 The program includes job-specific requirements related to the rules, regulations, codes, standards, and guides necessary to carry out the mission of the office. The program supports the mission needs of the office.

Review Approach

A tailored review approach is to be developed for each assessment activity that identifies the specific lines of inquiry, documents and records to be reviewed, personnel to interview, and activities to be observed.

e. TQP-5, Credit for Existing Technical Qualification Programs.

The program is structured to allow credit, where appropriate, for other Technical Qualification Program accomplishments.

Criteria:

- 5.1 Credit (equivalency) is granted for previous training, education, experience, and completion of related technical qualification programs, where applicable.
- 5.2 Equivalency is granted based upon a review and verification of objective evidence, such as transcripts, course certificates, test scores, or on-the-job experience. Equivalencies are formally validated, approved, and documented.

Review Approach

A tailored review approach is to be developed for each assessment activity that identifies the documents and records to be reviewed, personnel to interview, and activities to be observed.

f. TQP-6, Transportability.

Competency requirements identified as applying throughout the Department are transferable.

Criteria:

- 6.1 The program includes all competencies that have been identified as applying throughout the Department.
- 6.2 Formal documentation of the completion of Department-wide competencies is maintained in a manner that allows for easy transferability.
- 6.3 The TQP is integrated with personnel-related activities, such as position descriptions, vacancy announcements, recruiting, and performance appraisals.

Review Approach

A tailored review approach is to be developed for each assessment activity that identifies the specific lines of inquiry, documents and records to be reviewed, personnel to interview, and activities to be observed.

g. TQP-7, Measurable.

The program contains sufficient rigor to demonstrate compliance to the requirements.

Criteria:

- 7.1 The technical competency of personnel who have completed the requirements of the TQP is adequate and appropriate.
- 7.2 The program allows for continuous feedback and periodic evaluation to ensure that it meets the needs of the Department and the missions of the office.
- 7.3 The TQP provides for continuing training.

Review Approach

A tailored review approach is to be developed for each assessment activity that identifies the specific lines of inquiry, documents and records to be reviewed, personnel to interview, and activities to be observed.