



#We Are Sterling

Elevating organizational performance excellence.

Key Characteristics of the Criteria

1. The Criteria focus on results.

The Criteria focus on the key areas of organizational performance given here. The use of this composite of measures is intended to ensure that strategies are balanced—that they do not inappropriately trade off among important stakeholders, objectives, or short- and longer-term goals.

Organizational performance areas:

- (1) product, service and process results
- (2) customer-focused results
- (3) workforce-focused results
- (4) leadership and governance results
- (5) financial and market results

2. The Criteria are non-prescriptive and adaptable.

The Criteria are made up of results-oriented requirements. However, the Criteria do not prescribe the following:

- How your organization should be structured
- That your organization should or should not have departments for planning, ethics, quality, or other functions
- That different units in your organization should be managed in the same way

These factors differ among organizations, and they are likely to change as needs and strategies evolve. The Criteria are non-prescriptive for the following reasons:

- The focus is on results, not on procedures, tools, or organizational structure. Organizations are encouraged to develop and demonstrate creative, adaptive, and flexible approaches for meeting requirements. Non-prescriptive requirements are intended to foster incremental and major “breakthrough” improvements through innovation.
- The selection of tools, techniques, systems, and organizational structure usually depends on factors such as the organization type and size, organizational relationships, your organization’s stage of development, and the capabilities and responsibilities of your workforce.
- A focus on common requirements, rather than on common procedures, fosters understanding, communication, sharing, alignment, and integration, while supporting innovation and diversity in approaches.

3. The Criteria support a systems perspective to maintaining organization-wide goal alignment.

The systems perspective to goal alignment is embedded in the integrated structure of the core values and concepts; the Organizational Profile; the Criteria; the scoring guidelines; and the results-oriented, cause-effect, cross-process linkages among the Criteria items.

Alignment in the Criteria is built around connecting and reinforcing measures derived from your organization’s processes and strategy. These measures tie directly to customer and stakeholder value and to overall performance. The use of measures thus channels different activities in consistent directions with less need for detailed procedures, centralized decision making, or overly complex process management. Measures thereby serve both as a communications tool and as a basis for deploying consistent overall performance requirements. Such alignment ensures consistency of purpose while also supporting agility, innovation, and decentralized decision-making.

A systems perspective to goal alignment, particularly as strategy and goals change over time, requires dynamic linkages among Criteria items. In the Criteria, action-oriented cycles of improvement take place via feedback between processes and results.

The improvement cycles have four, clearly defined stages:

- planning , including design of processes, selection of measures, and deployment of requirements (**approach**)
- executing plans (**deployment**)
- assessing progress and capturing new knowledge, including seeking opportunities for innovation (**learning**)
- revising plans based on assessment findings, harmonizing processes and work unit operations, and selecting better measures (**integration**)

4. The Criteria support goal-based diagnosis.

The Criteria and the scoring guidelines make up a two-part diagnostic (assessment) system. The Criteria are a set of 17 performance-oriented requirements. The scoring guidelines spell out the assessment dimensions—process and results— and the key factors used to assess each dimension. An assessment thus provides a profile of strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to the 17 performance-oriented requirements and relative to process and performance maturity as determined by the scoring guidelines. In this way, assessment leads to actions that contribute to performance improvement in all areas, as described above. This diagnostic assessment is a useful management tool that goes beyond most performance reviews and is applicable to a wide range of strategies, management systems, and types of organizations.