

Clarification of Terms

Conduct Appraisal Phase, On-site Phase, Phase II (2), 90-day Clock, and 60-Day Limits

Quality Management has received numerous requests to clarify the following terms as they apply to the CMMI Performance Solutions Ecosystem: Conduct Appraisal Phase, On-site Phase, Phase II (2), 90-day clock, and 60-day limits. This Quality Tip will clarify and define these terms in the context of the current version of CMMI.

Conduct Appraisal Phase, On-Site Phase, and Phase II (2)

Conduct Appraisal Phase, On-site Phase, and Phase II (2) all have the same meaning regarding the appraisal timeline, so for this document we will use “Conduct Appraisal Phase.” During the Conduct Appraisal Phase, the appraisal team reviews artifacts, conducts interviews, and holds discussions for the purpose of characterizing the implementation of model practices to generate the ratings in scope for the appraisal. These activities are detailed in *Section 2: Conduct Appraisal* of the CMMI Appraisal Method Definition Document (MDD).

The 90-Day Clock

All CMMI appraisals must be completed, and appraisal results must be reported to the appraised organization, within 90 days of beginning the Conduct Appraisal Phase. This is referred to as the “90-day clock.” The 90-day clock for the completion of the appraisal starts when the appraisal team reviews evidence with the intent to derive characterization of practice implementation. For most appraisals, this starts on the first day that the entire team is assembled to conduct document reviews and interviews and may begin with an opening briefing session. However, there are some circumstances that can create an overlap between the Phase 1 (Plan and Prepare for Appraisal) and the Conduct Appraisal Phase, which results in the 90-day clock starting prior to the official kickoff of the appraisal.

The appraisal readiness review is an appraisal planning activity in which the Lead Appraiser (LA) and Appraisal Team Members (ATMs) evaluate the organization’s preparedness for Conduct Appraisal Phase activities. The primary purpose of this review is to ensure that the organization’s objective evidence is available and adequately covers the model scope. The readiness review also evaluates whether the logistics for the appraisal have been arranged and are adequate, and whether the team is prepared to perform its assigned role. From the readiness review, a “go/no go” decision is made regarding whether to proceed with the appraisal. The readiness review is not intended to replace the performance of document review for characterizing practice implementation.

If a readiness review is conducted that includes evaluation of the implementation of model practices to shorten the effort of practice characterization, then the readiness review has started the Conduct Appraisal Phase and the “90-day clock.”

Conduct Appraisal Phase Start

Nuances can help one to understand when the transition to the Conduct Appraisal Phase has been made. The intent and intensity of evidence review are the best indicators.

1. If inventorying evidence *without judgment to determine if it is sufficient to show implementation of a practice*, then the Conduct Appraisal Phase has not started. Inventorying without judgment falls within the activities of “Phase 1: Plan and Prepare for Appraisal” also known as “Phase I” or “Planning.”
2. If inventorying evidence to judge if it substantiates a practice that is being implemented, then this is part of the Conduct Appraisal Phase. This activity is related to evaluating the relevance, suitability, and/or sufficiency of evidence.
3. Once a judgment regarding the evidence is made during any part of delivering an appraisal, the Conduct Appraisal Phase has started.

It is important to note that once the Conduct Appraisal Phase has begun, the appraisal team is not permitted to introduce any document created from that point forward. The CMMI MDD Section 2.2.1 Parameters and Limits states, “Artifacts used as objective evidence must have been created or revised prior to the start of the Conduct Appraisal Phase. The team may request to view artifacts that result from recurring activities, even if the activity occurred after the start of the appraisal. In no case would an artifact created after the start of an appraisal be accepted as the only artifact in demonstrating the implementation of a practice.”

60-Day Limit for Appraisals

The “60-day limit” refers to the period of time associated with the [Appraisal Delivery Limits Policy](#) which states that an LA can deliver no more than four Benchmark and/or Sustainment Appraisals in a rolling 60 calendar-day-period. The span between the last day of Phase 2 of the first appraisal in a rolling series of five appraisals to the first day of Phase 2 of the fifth appraisal in a rolling series of five appraisals must be 60 calendar days or greater to be compliant with the Appraisal Delivery Limits Policy as shown in [this graphic example](#).

Questions regarding this Quality Tip may be directed to quality@cmminstitute.com.