

2008 Innovations Awards Program  
APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 07- 08-S-360K

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Oklahoma

Assign Program Category (applicant): (Use list at end of application)  
Public Safety/Corrections

1. Program Name:  
Oklahoma Department of Corrections Quality Assurance System
2. Administering Agency:  
Oklahoma Department of Corrections
3. Contact Person (Name and Title):  
Debbie Boyer, SPHR, Administrator, Quality Assurance and Operational Services
4. Address:  
2901 Classen, Suite 200, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73106
5. Telephone Number:  
405-962-6083
6. FAX Number:  
405-962-6102
7. E-mail Address:  
[debbie.boyer@doc.state.ok.us](mailto:debbie.boyer@doc.state.ok.us)
8. Web site Address:  
[www.doc.state.ok.us](http://www.doc.state.ok.us)

9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections Quality Assurance System provides a system for the continuous review and evaluation of all areas operated by the department or by a provider under contract with the department in an effort to ensure: (1) the best allocation of resources; (2) the most efficient and effective operations based on continuous improvement; and (3) creation and delivery of quality (best practice), results-driven programs and services to better fulfill the department's vision and mission.

The Quality Assurance System includes three components: (1) An **Organizational Review Process** which utilizes panels of internal and external subject matter experts to conduct comprehensive examinations of operational areas (work performed, reasons for the work performed, processes utilized to perform the work, how these processes can be improved, and how these processes can be measured) and make recommendations for improvement; (2) **Quality Councils** responsible for chartering process action teams to address problems, issues, or work processes; and (3) delivery of training in quality awareness, teams, tools, and techniques as well as team facilitation skills.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008, to be considered.

January 2006

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections is the second largest state agency with responsibility for nearly 4,700 full-time employees; an offender population of over 56,000; and a Fiscal Year 2008 budget work program in excess of \$535 million.

In a proactive approach to address constituent concerns related to department operations and in an effort to meet its obligation for efficient and effective operations to the taxpayers of the state of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections established a Quality Assurance System in January, 2006.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

- The Quality Assurance Unit became operational on January 17, 2006.

The unit was initially staffed with two full-time employees. In August 2006, the unit was restructured to include oversight of finance and business operations for Divisional Administration, Programs, Medical Services, and Mental Health Services as well as *personnel functions* for Divisional Administration and Programs.

- A Corrections Quality Assurance Business Plan was developed and submitted February 2, 2006. The plan outlined the basic framework for the Organizational Review component of the Quality Assurance System and included an appendix listing of the agency's core business functions.
- Policy and procedures were developed. A Board of Corrections Policy Statement P-010600 was written and became effective March 1, 2006. An Operations Memorandum No. OP-010601 was written and became effective June 19, 2007.
- An Organizational Review Process Map was developed. The process map was designed to guide Organizational Review Panels through the process.

The Organizational Review Process includes several communication "checkpoints" with the site representative for the area under review and other key decision makers throughout the process.

- The Quality Assurance System is transparent. A web site (<http://www.doc.state.ok.us/treatment/quality/index.html>) was developed and includes a Communications section where organizational review report summaries, progress reports, and communication bulletins are routinely posted.
- A Quality Assurance E-Mail "Hotline" was established ([improvementatwork@doc.state.ok.us](mailto:improvementatwork@doc.state.ok.us)). This "hotline" provides an additional avenue for employees of the area under review to submit confidential feedback and suggestions for improvement directly to the Quality Assurance office.
- A request for a technical assistance grant was submitted, and a grant was awarded by the National Institute of Corrections. The grant provided for a consultant to travel to Oklahoma to provide initial training on Quality Awareness, Teams, Tools, and Techniques.

A two-day session was provided by National Institute of Corrections Correctional Programs Specialist, Dr. John Eggers, to Department of Corrections upper managers on March 27-28, 2006.

On June 6-8, 2006, a training team composed of Dr. Eggers and Quality Assurance staff presented a three-day Quality Awareness, Teams, Tools, and Techniques Training for Trainers session to 21 employees from across the agency.

This training was particularly challenging in that it required participants to serve as instructors and "teach back" the various segments of the training to the entire class. These staff members are responsible for providing "just in time" training to process action teams chartered by agency leadership to work on addressing problems with agency-wide or work location specific impact.

On July 11-12, 2006, a two-day Facilitation Skills training session was provided for 18 employees. This training focused specifically on those skills needed to successfully facilitate process action teams as they work on problem solving or quality improvement processes.

- A marketing plan was developed and approved by the agency's executive communications manager.

Marketing efforts have been ongoing since the unit was established.

Initial marketing efforts included informational presentations to the agency's executive staff, upper managers, Board of Corrections members, and various other groups of employees within the agency.

Articles were published in the agency's newsletter in March/April and May 2006. Another article has been submitted for publication and will appear in an upcoming issue.

Internal and external stakeholders are routinely kept informed of progress made through the issuance of Quality Assurance Communications Bulletins which are distributed via e-mail blast system-wide as well as posted on the agency's web page. (Examples are attached.)

Eleven bulletins were issued during 2006 (January 24, February 15, March 10, March 31, May 24, June 12, June 20, July 17, August 21, October 11, and November 28).

Four bulletins were issued during 2007 (March 6, March 26, June 25, and October 23).

Three bulletins have been issued thus far in 2008 (February 7, February 20, and March 10).

A marketing brochure has been developed (attached).

The first Quality Assurance Annual Progress Report was issued in January 2008 and provides a status report on each approved recommendation resulting from the four completed organizational reviews (attached).

Facility site visits are planned to further market the Quality Assurance System during Calendar Year 2008.

- An Organizational Review of the Employee Assistance Program was completed in May 2006.

Subject matter expert panel members included: EAP Coordinator, Oklahoma State Department of Health; EAP Coordinator, Office of Personnel Management; and Quality Assurance Administrator, Oklahoma Department of Corrections.

**Results Highlights:** This review resulted in 11 recommendations. Nine have been implemented, and two are in progress. Employee Assistance services were outsourced via a contract established with Integris Corporate Assistance. The Employee Assistance Office was closed, and staff were reassigned. The cost of services was reduced from \$38.41 per employee or \$3.20 per employee per month to \$9.95 per employee or 83 cents per employee per month.

- An Organizational Review of Volunteer Services was completed in May 2006.

Subject matter expert panel members included: Projects Manager, Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives; Major, Salvation Army--Arkansas/Oklahoma Division; Coordinator, Office of Volunteerism, Department of Human Services; and Quality Assurance Administrator, Oklahoma Department of Corrections.

**Results Highlights:** This review resulted in 30 recommendations. Twenty-five have been implemented, and five are in progress. A centralized volunteer database was established including a method of collecting knowledge, skills, and abilities information on volunteers so volunteers can be utilized for occupational purposes as well as programmatic purposes. An exit survey system was established for volunteers. A performance appraisal system was established for volunteers. A five year strategic plan is under development.

- An Organizational Review of the Tulsa Correctional Emergency Response Team was completed in November 2006.

Panel members included: Department of Corrections Retiree and Former Training Academy Manager, Correctional Training Academy; State Commander of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol Emergency Response Team; and Probation and Parole Officer III, Oklahoma Department of Corrections, Division of Community Corrections.

**Results Highlights:** This review resulted in 9 recommendations. Two have been implemented, and seven are in progress. The Tulsa Correctional Emergency Response Team was eliminated at an estimated savings of over \$14,000. A Process Action Team was established to develop a uniform escape protocol for Community Corrections. All halfway house contracts are being rewritten and standardized.

- The Organizational Review of Victim Services was completed in December 2006.

Panel members included: Victim Coordinator Assistant, Canadian County District Attorney's Office; Quality Assurance Administrator, Oklahoma Department of Corrections; Victim Services Coordinator, Oklahoma Attorney General's Office; Probation and Parole Officer II, Oklahoma Department of Corrections; and Victim Specialist, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

**Results Highlights:** This review resulted in 17 recommendations. Five have been implemented, and twelve are in progress. A Victim Advisory Council was established to serve as a resource in developing a strategic plan for Victim Services and provide ongoing guidance regarding program development. A Victim Satisfaction Survey was developed. A toll free line for out-of-state callers was established.

- The Organizational Review of the Offender Classification Audit Process is underway. The panel submitted an interim report on December 19, 2006, and met with Director Justin Jones and other key decision makers to discuss the panel's 15 initial recommendations on January 11, 2007.

Subject matter expert panel members include: Assistant Executive Coordinator, Oklahoma County District Attorney's Council; Oklahoma County Juvenile Bureau Chief; Warden, Charles E. "Bill" Johnson Correctional Center, Oklahoma Department of Corrections; and Programs Administrator, Oklahoma Department of Corrections.

**Result Highlights:** As a result of the panel's interim report, Director Jones subsequently chartered a Process Action Team to conduct a comprehensive examination of roles, responsibilities, job descriptions, staffing levels, and job specific training of all correctional unit staff. The Process Action Team utilized a structured problem-solving process to collect additional data, conduct its analysis, and make 23 data-driven recommendations which are under consideration at this time.

- On May 29, 2007, the Organizational Review Panel convened to examine finance and business operations statewide submitted its interim report. The report, which was in excess of 1,000 pages, documented over 700 work processes and included 196 initial recommendations.

The Financial and Business Services Organizational Review Panel includes: Business Manager III, James Crabtree Correctional Center, Oklahoma Department of Corrections; Oklahoma State Comptroller, Office of State Finance; Associate Administrator and Chief Financial Officer, Office of Personnel Management; Deputy Oklahoma State Comptroller, Office of State Finance; Local Administrator, Tulsa Community Sentencing, Oklahoma Department of Corrections; Assistant Director, Comptroller Division, Department of Transportation; and Chief Financial Officer, Department of Central Services.

**Results Highlights:** Decisions have been made regarding the 196 recommendations, and implementation plans are currently under development.

- Staff interviews are conducted as part of the Organizational Review Process. These staff interviews are now conducted via video-conferencing in an effort to reduce travel time and costs as well as minimize impact on workload.

- Videoconferencing capability has also allowed for subject matter experts from corrections departments nationally to serve as members of the Organizational Review Panels.
- Six additional Organization Reviews have been initiated and include: (1) Medical Services, (2) Offender Programs, (3) Procedures and Accreditation, (4) Maintenance Operations, (5) Sex Offender Treatment, and (6) Offender Education.

Two of these Organizational Review Panels include panel members outside the state of Oklahoma.

- Significant progress has been made toward the integration of the Quality Assurance System into the culture and daily business operations of the agency.

This is demonstrated by the number of Process Action Teams being chartered across the agency.

Quality Assurance staff are facilitating and providing support for these teams, as well as providing just-in-time training as teams are chartered. For example, just-in-time training was provided to staff from the James Crabtree Correctional Center, the Charles E. "Bill" Johnson Correctional Center, and the William Key Correctional Center on March 28, 2007.

- Process action teams have been chartered to examine a variety of topics including: (1) Tobacco Free Workplace Program; (2) Oklahoma State Penitentiary Rodeo; (3) Feasibility/development of Citizens Academies; (4) Development of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment Process for Volunteers; (5) Community Corrections Correctional Officer Personal Appearance; (6) Reentry Services; (7) Case Management and Unit Management Agency-Wide; (8) Nurse Scheduling; (9) Co-Occurring Disorders in Offenders; (10) Offender Suicide Prevention; (11) Community Corrections Escape Reduction; (12) Community Corrections Fleet Management, (13) Community Corrections Communications, and (14) James Crabtree Correctional Center Food Service Operations.
- The integration of the Quality Assurance System is further demonstrated through a collaborative effort with the department's Correctional Leadership Development Unit.

Participants of the Correctional Leadership Development Program are provided training in Quality Awareness, Teams, Tools, and Techniques. These participants are then assigned to process action teams with written chartering agreements and must work together over a period of several months on projects with agency-wide impact and must report progress to the agency's upper management.

The first group of leadership development participants was trained on April 10, 2007, and have been working on three Process Action Teams chartered to address: (1) Nurse Recruitment and Retention; (2) Affirmative Action; and (3) Sex Offender Public Education and Awareness.

- On a national level, the Department of Corrections Quality Assurance Unit took the lead in establishing an e-mail list serve for correctional quality administrators nationwide in an effort to enhance information sharing and networking. The list serve became operational in 2008.
- Additionally, national information-sharing efforts continued with the presentation of a workshop entitled, "Quality Assurance in Corrections: An Innovative Approach to Self-Examination," at the 2008 Winter Conference of the American Correctional Association.
- Further, an article is being written for submission to *Corrections Today* magazine which will discuss how the Oklahoma Department of Corrections Quality Assurance System operationalizes core elements of the agency's vision statement (Empowering Employees; Encouraging Teamwork; Employing Best Practices; and Embracing Diversity).
- On May 8, 2007, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections Quality Assurance System was recognized with a Governor's Commendation and received the highest award presented during the state's Oklahoma Team Day—the Quality Crown Award of Excellence. Quality Oklahoma Team Day is an annual event sponsored by the Office of Personnel Management where teams from Oklahoma state agencies compete for various awards.
- Additionally, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections just underwent a top-to-bottom legislatively mandated performance audit conducted by MGT of America, Inc. The audit report commended the department on its Quality Assurance efforts.

### 13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

Prior to January 2006, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections did not have a Quality Assurance System that examines operational areas with a focus on continuous improvement.

The Quality Assurance System is creative in that it marries ongoing review processes conducted by subject matter experts who are primarily external to the agency with ongoing "grass roots" self-examinations and improvements made as the result of Process Action Teams composed of agency employees.

One of the key components of the Corrections Quality Assurance system is the use of a series of **Organizational Review Panels** composed of internal and external subject matter experts (including experts from outside the state of Oklahoma) to conduct comprehensive examinations of operational areas and make recommendations for improvement. These panel members provide services at no cost to the Department of Corrections.

The Organizational Review Process itself includes a **survey component** which demonstrates the agency's commitment to employee empowerment. Input is gathered from employees of the area under review as well as department upper managers and internal and external

stakeholders for the area under review. Employees and key decision makers are also interviewed as part of this process.

Additionally, an environmental scan is conducted to look outward (Oklahoma state agencies, Departments of Corrections nationally, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and private corporations, etc.) to identify best practices with the potential for helping the Oklahoma Department of Corrections improve organizational performance.

All primary work processes are flow charted. The Organizational Review Panels are responsible for conducting a comprehensive examination of the area under review to determine if there are functions that are "misplaced" or duplicated and to identify opportunities for short-term and long-term improvements.

In addition to the surveying component, this process often includes gathering and analyzing data regarding the specific area under review, conducting staff interviews, etc.

Additionally, the panels are responsible for identifying a "Desired" State and performance measurements for each area under review.

Written reports of panel findings are reviewed by Director Jones and the Board of Corrections.

Each Organizational Review conducted is evaluated by measuring the satisfaction levels of panel members, the site representative, and key decision makers involved in the process so that ongoing improvements can be made to the process itself.

Further, customer "feedback" interviews are scheduled periodically to obtain feedback from agency leadership and ideas on ways to continually improve the Quality Assurance System.

In a parallel effort, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections established an Executive Quality Council and a series of Local Quality Councils responsible for chartering Process Action Teams to address problems, issues, or work processes. These councils develop written chartering agreements that empower Process Action Teams to act.

Process Action Teams utilize quality principles, practices, and techniques to analyze problems or examine work process and make data-driven recommendations in accordance with the reporting requirements specified in the chartering agreement and submit a written report summarizing the team's activities and recommendations.

Quality Assurance supports these program components by providing training in quality teams, tools, and techniques, as well as process action team facilitation skills for staff; providing trained facilitators for teams; providing support and serving as process guides; and serving as the repository for team agreements and reports for reference as new teams are chartered and for archival purposes.

In summary, the Quality Assurance System is an innovative approach to self-examination.

The Quality Assurance System operationalizes the agency's vision of Empowering Employees (seeking ideas and feedback through surveys and interviews); Encouraging Teamwork (providing training and chartering process action teams); Employing Best Practices (using external subject matter experts to conduct Organizational Reviews and including an environmental scan as an integral part of the Organizational Review Process); and Embracing Diversity (teams and review panels represent diversity in gender, race, age, experience, and most of all diversity in thinking).

The Quality Assurance System provides the Department of Corrections an opportunity to examine operations at all levels in the organization and make significant and continuous improvements.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for the program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

Existing staff and FTE (full-time equivalent positions) were utilized to start the program. In addition to the duties and responsibilities related to quality assurance, these staff members also provide administrative support for the Deputy Director of Treatment and Rehabilitative Services. New furniture was purchased at a cost of \$5,000.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

The Fiscal Year 2008 operating budget for Quality Assurance was \$146,635. \$80,000 of this amount was included for the acquisition of a new automated performance management system.

16. How is the program funded?

The program is funded from operating funds appropriated to the Department of Corrections.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

No

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, PowerPoint, SmartDraw, and Adobe Publisher--Currently, we are considering purchase of PerformanceSoft software-a software designed for management and reporting of data related to key performance indicators.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Although the use of Quality Councils and process action teams is not new, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections Quality Assurance System is unique in that it utilizes a self-designed Organizational Review Process in combination with Quality Councils and Process Action Teams.

The Organizational Review process in its entirety and its use of panels composed on internal and external subject matter experts is an element that is most likely unique to Oklahoma's Quality Assurance System.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does the program differ?

Several state Department of Corrections utilize Quality Councils and Process Action Teams as part of their system for continuous improvement; however, these programs do not include the Organizational Review component utilized by Oklahoma.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

Yes

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

#### Quality Assurance System Pros

- Employees are empowered and have a voice into improving agency operations.
- The Organizational Review of the Employee Assistance Program resulted in an estimated savings of \$50,000. The cost of services was reduced from \$38.41 per employee or \$3.20 per employee per month to \$9.95 per employee or 83 cents per employee per month.
- The Organizational Review of the Tulsa Correctional Emergency Response Team resulted in an estimated savings of \$14,400.
- Numerous other recommendations were made as a result of the Organizational Review Process. These recommendations were approved by the agency director and are being implemented by individual units within the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. Please refer to the attached Progress Report.
- These reviews have also resulted in increased collaboration with other state and federal agencies because staff from these agencies have served as members of review panels. Their

experiences on these panels have increased their knowledge and understanding of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections and have provided them ideas and information they can take back to their agencies for implementation.

- At the conclusion of each organizational review, all involved are asked to respond to a series of questions. The feedback from participants is then used to make ongoing improvements to the process itself. Following are the criteria and ratings.

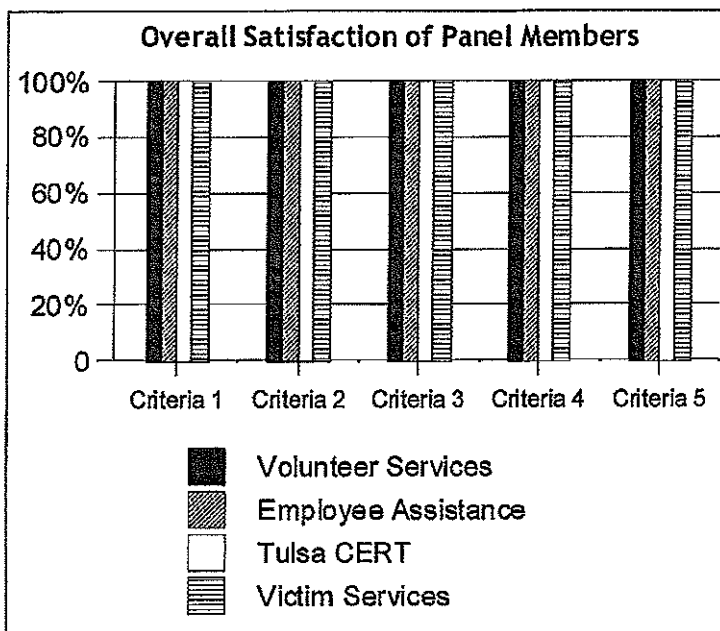
### Satisfaction of Panel Members with the Organizational Review Process

Criteria 1: The Organizational Review Process was an effective method of completing a comprehensive review of the area under review.

Criteria 2: Your ideas and knowledge about the subject were respected and valued, and there was an open flow of ideas.

Criteria 3: Quality Assurance staff effectively supported and assisted the panel in its review.

Criteria 4: Overall, you believe your experience as a panel member was a worthwhile experience. Criteria 5: You are proud of the panel's work product.



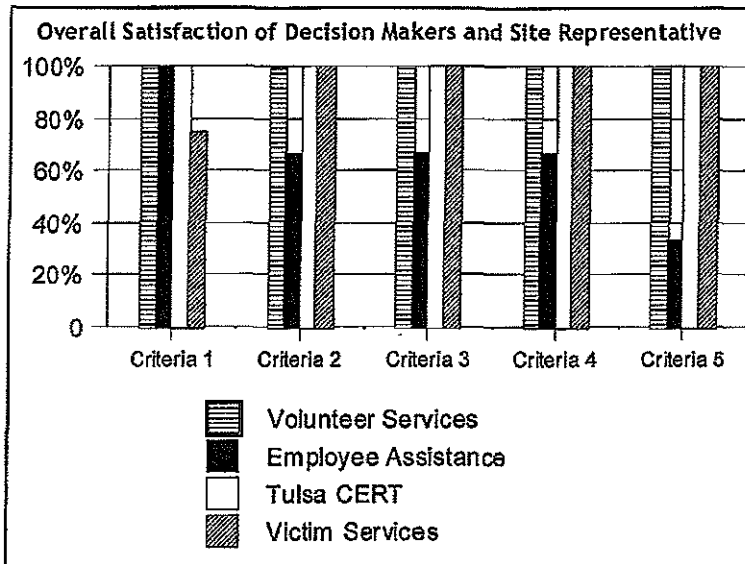
## Satisfaction of Decision Makers and Site Representative with the Organizational Review Process

Criteria 1: The Organizational Review Process was an effective method of completing a comprehensive review of the area under review.

Criteria 1: Communication was maintained with key decision makers throughout the review process. Criteria 3: The panel was knowledgeable about the subject area.

Criteria 4: Overall, the "Quick Wins" and final recommendations were well thought, comprehensive, and valuable to improving the Volunteer Services operation.

Criteria 5: Quality Assurance staff effectively support and assisted during the review.



- Some of the comments from those involved include: "This process allows us to consider new possibilities and better ways to serve the agency." "It was a great opportunity to get a better understanding and insight into another state agency." "I liked the use of external experts in reviewing the organization. The exchange of information is extremely valuable. The department benefits from the expertise of the panel members, and the panel members benefit from the discussion and exchange of information and ideas that may be applicable to their own programs."
- At the conclusion of each training session, participants are asked to respond to a series of questions. The feedback from participants is then used to make ongoing improvements to the training program. Following are the criteria and ratings.

## Participant Evaluation of Quality Awareness, Teams, Tools, and Techniques Training

Criteria 1: Presenters clearly communicated learning points and objectives.

Criteria 2: Questions were answered to ensure participant understanding.

Criteria 3: Participant learning was monitored and instruction adjusted as needed.

Criteria 4: The presentation topics were informative, pertinent, and well planned.

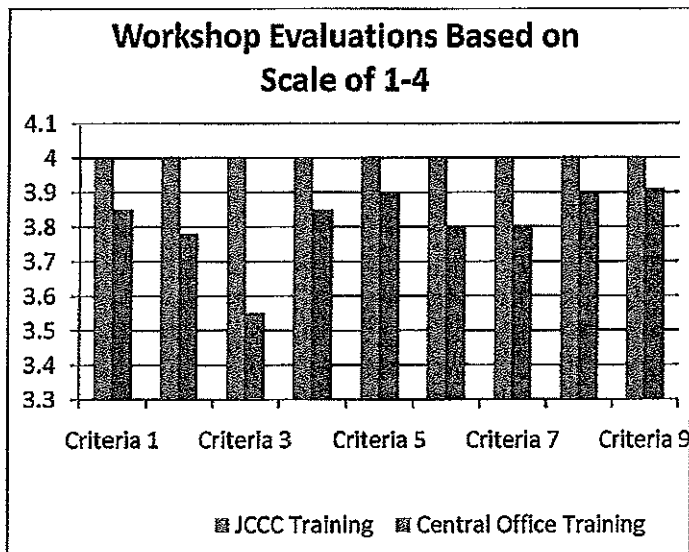
Criteria 5: A summary/closure was used to assess degree of participant learning related to learning points or objectives.

Criteria 6: Used group involvement/activities as learning opportunities.

Criteria 7: Encouraged and responded appropriately.

Criteria 8: Used training aids and equipment properly.

Criteria 9: Overall presentation.



- Process Action Teams continue to address organizational problems, issues, or work processes and make improvements as needed. Process Action Teams utilize a Teamwork Evaluation to assess their progress (attached).

### Quality Assurance System Cons

- Staff members from the area under review are somewhat uncomfortable and disconcerted knowing their area is under review.

This was identified during initial program design, and one of the goals became to be as transparent as possible. A communications plan was initially developed (see above). Communication Bulletins are issued on a routine basis; presentations are made to the groups under review; and executive summaries for all reports are made available on the agency's web page.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

Minor changes have been implemented since the program's inception based on feedback from those involved in the process.

The agency's confidence in the organizational review process has grown as reviews have been completed.

The complexity of the areas being reviewed has grown from small areas to complex areas with statewide impact.

The number of process action teams has grown as more staff are trained and have begun to see the results of other teams.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

It may be difficult to obtain the cooperation of external parties to volunteer their time to serve on Organizational Review Panels.

Attachments:

Policy Statement

Operations Memorandum with Attachments

Executive Summaries of Organizational Reviews Completed

January 10, 2008, Annual Progress Report

Quality Assurance in Corrections: An Innovative Approach to Self-Examination Brochure

Communication Bulletin Examples (January 24, 2006; June 12, 2006; June 20, 2006; June 25, 2007; October 23, 2007; and March 10, 2008)