Experience of Reviews: The Agency View

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Aim of presentation

- To see what a real agency experienced during a review
  - **Focus not on agency itself but generic observations, practical considerations**

- Preparing for the site visit
  - Organization
  - Preparing the agency staff and members
  - Additional documents requested by the panel
    - Language of documents

- Developments at the agency after the review
A few words about the SER

- The more thorough the SER and the more it is backed by evidence, documents of links to them, the smoother the panel visit will go!
- **Important to deal extensively with issues raised in previous review** (separate chapter in SER template)

- The SAR is written with the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible
  - An agency staff member did the actual writing but consulted with most other staff for information and opinions
  - Meetings with staff to discuss drafts
    - **Issue: not all staff speak English** – summarize main points for discussions
      - Meetings with agency working group for the SER – staff and Board members
      - Feedback and final approval of the agency Board
- The final SER is sent to all stakeholders expected to participate in the interviews, who are briefly informed what to expect there

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Organization of site visit

- Panel contacts agency several weeks before site visit to indicate what groups they wish to interview
  - Agency drafts a proposed visit schedule based on panel’s requests

- **Agency may offer a list of recommended persons to interview to panel**
  - Here we are **pressed for time**, since e.g. the minister or some stakeholders have to know well in advance to keep their calendars open
  - Even so, **not all invited stakeholders show up**
    - Therefore we **contact all of them a few days prior** to visit to check
Preparing staff and Board members

Staff:
- When talking through SER with staff the experienced staff members describe what to expect in the interview
  - Need interpreter
    - Should be external to agency
    - Panel should be informed ahead of time (slows discussions)
  - May be asked on general agency practices and specific work of individual
  - Answer questions readily and openly
  - Everyone is encouraged to speak
    - Cultural context, language barrier!
- Board:
  - Board members are informed during last plenary meeting what to expect in the interview and contacted again prior to the site visit
  - Are emphatically asked to read SER

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Panel requests additional documents

- Panel always asks for additional documents, especially when not all documents are on website **in English**
- Panel is asked to **identify additional documents** after it reads the SAR – **prior to visit** – so that these can be translated into English
  - Crucial to have at **least one panel member who speaks the local language** (impossible to translate all documents) so that the panel knows the whole range of documents the agency works with
- **Staff or Board member may identify additional documents** to present to panel based on panel’s questions during an interview – these may need to be translated or summarized in English quickly
During the site visit

• Most interviews are **conducted at the agency offices**
  – Panel has spacious room at its disposal for the whole site visit
  – In our case, the panel visited minister at the ministry

• Level of **excitement is high** during the visit
  – Agency staff and interviewed stakeholders discuss what took place in the interview after they come out of a session
  • Good chance to identify ourselves what may need clarification, additional documents, data, presentation of database etc.
After the site visit

• Staff and Board discuss impressions, perceived strengths and weaknesses based on questions by panel
• Wait for panel report!

• Identify follow-up actions based on own experiences from site visit and on the panel report to prepare for follow-up report for ENQA
• Publish SER and panel report together with ENQA decision on website
Thank you!