

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

Without proper self-evaluation,
failure is inevitable.

— John Wooden —

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

The natural response to evaluation is to feel judged. We have to mature to a place where we respond to it with gratitude, and love feedback.



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



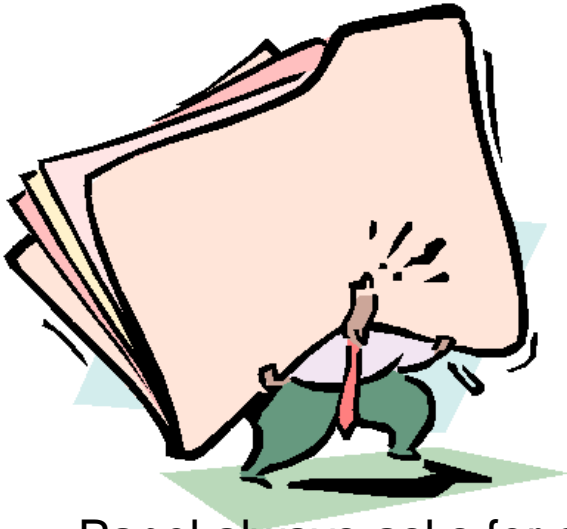
Preparing staff and Board members

- 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



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!

