

ASBDC Accreditation Review Instructions for Preparing The Self-Study Guide

Overview

The purpose of the self-study guide is (1) to provide the accreditation review team with needed information about an SBDC's network of centers, (2) to provide summary evidence whether the SBDC meets the ASBDC accreditation standards, and (3) to identify and share "best practices". The accreditation review team will use the self-study guide to make initial, provisional judgments about the SBDC's quality of operations and compliance with the accreditation standards and to design their approach to the accreditation review. During the onsite portion of the accreditation review, the team will assess and validate the information in the self-study guide.

Prior to writing the self-study guide, the SBDC's leadership should have begun the process of incorporating the ASBDC accreditation standards into their operation. This requires not just familiarity with the standards, but in-depth understanding of them. Sources of information about the accreditation standards include New State Directors Training and ASBDC Accreditation Standards workshops held at the Annual ASBDC Conference each fall, the ASBDC Accreditation Mentor Program, the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (<http://www.quality.nist.gov/>), and in some states quality programs affiliated with the Baldrige National Quality Program.

Instructions

Please use the following format in preparing your SBDC's self-study guide. Provide the self-study guide and documentation to each member of your SBDC's accreditation team and the ASBDC national office at least 30 days before the start of the accreditation review.

The format of the self-study guide has been developed (1) to promote greater understanding within the SBDC of the ASBDC accreditation standards by establishing linkages between standards and between the concepts of approach, deployment, and measurements, (2) to be a useful self-examination tool for the SBDC, and (3) to create for the review team a more comprehensive and coherent story about the SBDC.

To find more information about each instruction, the primary ASBDC accreditation standard to which an instruction in the self-study guide refers is supplied in brackets following the instruction. Use the accreditation standards and the comments in italics within the accreditation standards to frame your responses. Please do not attempt to respond to the instructions without first understanding the standards to which it applies.

The self-study guide is composed of two sections: (1) the narrative response and (2) the exhibits that provide evidence to support the narrative response. The accreditation review team prefers that you respond to the instructions in narrative form in one document for the entire state/region SBDC. The narrative section of the self-study guide should not exceed fifty pages and may well require considerably fewer pages. You must support the narrative with examples in the form of an exhibit. You are encouraged to use graphs, charts, and tables wherever appropriate.

You may provide the narrative and key exhibits on a CD-ROM for the review team. Key exhibits include the strategic plan, client needs assessments, organizational charts, resumes, key measurements and results, and similar documents. Other exhibits that are bulky or do not lend themselves to being placed on a CD-ROM may be placed into binders and held at the lead center for inspection during the accreditation review. These exhibits would include brochures and other published materials. Alternatively, you may provide all information in a hardcopy, printed format.

If you have questions, your accreditation team leader will assist with clarification.

The self-study guide is designed to help you and the team assess the following five categories. Leadership is assessed as an overarching issue within each category.

- 1. Client Needs**
- 2. Strategic Planning**
- 3. Organizational Structure**
- 4. Human Resources**
- 5. Program Services**

In each of these five categories, the accreditation team looks for:

- 1. Approach**
- 2. Deployment (processes or systems)**
- 3. Measurement of results**

For definitions of these terms, see “Definitions of terms and standards” in the appendix to the accreditation standards or the definitions on the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence website (<http://www.quality.nist.gov/>).

How to respond to each of the five categories in the Self Study

Step one-Introduction and Objective

Introduction is intended to provide the team with background information on your SBDC to enable basic structure, which does require a response to provide basic background information.

Objective is designed to help focus on what is expected in the category but does not require a direct response. Such information is a guide as to what the team is looking for under the headings of approach, deployment and results.

Step two-Approach

To write the self study it is recommended your SBDC develop a narrative on your SBDC’s approach addressing each of the items requested under approach. It is not necessary to separately answer every bullet point but instead describe your approach using the bullet points as a guide of points to include.

Step three- Deployment

Repeat a similar process under deployment as described in the above approach.

Step four- Results

In the results section the team would like actual results for this category to include charts or graphs that indicate level of performance. Limited narrative is needed for the results section as the objective is to enable understanding of the results through metrics. Data by its self may not be particularly meaningful, so we encourage a structure to enable the team to interpret

the level of performance of your SBDC. Level of performance can be determined when compared to things like trend lines, benchmarks or comparisons. Please present your data using this or similar methodologies. If you chose trend lines please try to have a minimum of three data points, annual if possible. If you use benchmarks or comparisons explain the logic for selection and how the team should view to determine the actual level of performance.

Step five- Technology Accreditation

If your SBDC is also applying for Technology Accreditation you will need to obtain the listing of information requested from the ASBDC web site and complete as part of the self study.

Introduction

Objective: To orient the accreditation review team to your SBDC.

- **Provide a one-paragraph description of the SBDC that includes:**
 - **the location of the lead center,**
 - **the number of service centers and specialty centers,**
 - **the year your SBDC program began,**
 - **any unique characteristics of the SBDC, such as its organizational structure or area served that are important to understanding and evaluating your program (e.g., size and/or population of service area, distribution of population, geography, etc.)**

1. Client Needs

Objective:

- To identify and segment customers, markets and key stakeholders,
- To determine requirements, expectations and preferences for each,
- To build relationships,
- To determine satisfaction of customers and stakeholders.

APPROACH [3.1]

- Describe your SBDC's needs assessment approach (formal and informal).
- Provide a copy in the exhibits of the most recent needs assessment *instrument* or other data used by your SBDC to determine the needs of the small business community.

DEPLOYMENT

- Describe how you use the needs assessment process in strategic planning and in designing strategies, objectives, and annual action plans. [3.1]
- Describe how you involve the appropriate SBA district director in the needs assessment process. [3.2.2]
- Identify the key customer requirements and how these translate into products and services.

Measurement of Results

- Report on the results (outputs and outcomes) and trends of products and services designed to meet the customer needs and key requirements. [7.3.1]

What the team looks for in this section:

- *The information your SBDC gathers on client and customer needs and what drives customer satisfaction.*
- *How your state analyzes both internal and external information to develop a strategic plan and the accompanying action steps.*
- *How you have used multiple "listening posts" to identify and segment your customers, markets and stakeholders.*
- *That you have a clear understanding of what each market segment expects, prefers and requires to be satisfied with your SBDC.*
- *Evidence that your SBA district director was involved in the needs assessment process.*
- *How you take the information you learn about your customers and translate that into products and services to address their various needs.*
- *How you know that the products and services you have designed to meet customer needs are having the impact you desire.*

2. Strategic Planning

Objective:

- **To implement a well-defined method to establish long-term strategy and short-term action plans to achieve that strategy,**
- **To align the organization in pursuit of its long-term strategy.**

APPROACH

- Describe your strategic planning model. Include the individuals involved at each level of the process. [2.1]**
- Describe the process you use to obtain feedback and updates and maintain the strategic plan. [2.1]**
- Provide the most recently updated strategic plan. [2.2]**

DEPLOYMENT

- Describe the process for assuring deployment and alignment of the strategic plan throughout your SBDC network. [2.3]**

MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

- Describe how your SBDC tracks, monitors and reports on the progress and implementation of its strategic plan and/or operating plan. [7.2.1]**

What the team looks for in this section:

- *How you gather, analyze and review customer and stakeholder, market, operational, organizational and employee data.*
- *Evidence that your SBDC has budgeted effectively to achieve its strategy and implement its action plans.*
- *How you set action plans at each level of your SBDC and ensure that those plans are aligned with the strategy and that they include measures, targets, schedules and resource allocation.*
- *Evidence that all staff at all levels of the organization understand how their individual work contributes to the organization achieving its goals and fulfilling its plans.*

3. Organizational Structure

Objective:

- To create an environment in which state directors and other program leaders routinely address organizational values and performance expectations,
- To establish a clear focus on customers and other stakeholders,
- To empower employees,
- To stimulate learning and innovation,
- To set organizational direction.

Leadership System

APPROACH

- Provide a map of the network delivery system, describe the reporting relationship of your SBDC state director, where your SBDC is placed within your host organization, and provide your host organizational chart. [1.1.3 & 1.2]
- Describe significant changes in the organizational structure that have taken place since the last review. [1.2.5]
- Describe your SBDC's working relationship with your SBA District Office and related SBA programs including any special supportive efforts that you have undertaken. [3.2.2]
- Provide the name, title, email address and telephone numbers for the following: [1.1.3]
 - The individual to whom the SBDC state/regional director reports,
 - Others in the chain of command above the SBDC director,
 - The chief administrator of the host organization,
 - The SBA District Director(s).

DEPLOYMENT

- Demonstrate how your SBDC's leadership establishes a clear focus, communicates that focus, trains staff on that focus and reviews performance based on that focus. [1.1.1, 1.1.2 and 5.1.2]
- Describe how your SBDC state/regional director maintains communication and oversight of the SBDC program. [1.1.2]
- Describe the human and other resources available at your SBDC's lead office to manage operations and service centers. [1.2.3]
- Provide names and organizational affiliations of the state advisory board members, a copy of the minutes of the most recent state advisory board meeting and any other documentation relative to the role and function of the board. Include information for local boards, if any. [3.2.4]

MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

- Explain how key leaders evaluate your SBDC's performance and use feedback from that evaluation. Provide data on performance to goal that demonstrates how goals are deployed, measured, and the results communicated to the centers. [7.2.1 & 7.4.1]

Relationship with Host Organization

APPROACH

- Describe the support of the chief administrative officer of the sponsoring organization and others within the host organization. [1.1.6]

DEPLOYMENT

- Describe how your SBDC participates in your host policy deliberations and is included as a component of host goals and economic development efforts. [1.1.3, 5.1.3 & 1.1.6]

MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

- Provide documentation that the chief administrative officer understands and supports the SBDC Program. Examples of documentation may include items such as: copies of press clippings, speeches, annual reports, etc. [1.1.6]
- Provide metric results on the value your SBDC is deriving from your host organization. This could include direct/indirect/in-kind funding; leveraging of students, faculty and professionals; or other special resources of the host. [7.5.2]

Development of a Performance System

Approach

- Describe the internal management system that is used to measure your SBDC's performance and effectiveness, including how your SBDC evaluates: [4.1]
 1. Quality of products and services,
 2. Customer and stakeholder satisfaction,
 3. Cost effectiveness,
 4. Achievement of action plans, goals, strategies, outcomes and economic impact.
- Describe your SBDC's participation in the national SBDC impact study. [4.1.3]

DEPLOYMENT

- Provide policies, procedures and survey instruments that document the internal evaluation system used by the SBDC. Describe and give examples of the corrective actions that are taken if results deviate from target goals. [4.1.2]

MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

- Provide a summary of performance results from your SBDC's internal management system. [7.4.1]
- Provide a copy of your state's economic research and impact results. [7.4.2]

Funding

APPROACH

- Describe your SBDC's procedure and processes for budget planning, budget administration and the level of control of the SBDC State Director. [1.1.4]
- Provide the name, title and telephone number of the chief budget officer of the host organization.

DEPLOYMENT [1.1.4 and 1.1.5]

- Provide a copy of the SBDC budget, including funding you have received via contact, grant or by donation. Also describe the sources of funding and cash match provided for

SBDC funding and indicate whether each source is continuous or limited in time of availability. [1.1.5]

- Describe attempts that have been made by the SBDC to obtain contracts, grants, private funds or other resources along with a list of funding obtained. [1.1.5]**
- Comment upon the ability to grow the program based upon a report of total current funding from all sources, including data with respect to recent past and projected funding trends.**

MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS [7.1.1]

- Provide a copy of the latest SBA Financial Programmatic Examination and describe what actions have been taken to address any findings.**
- Provide copies of information provided to supporters and/or funding partners to help them understand result of the SBDC efforts.**

Marketing Materials [6.2.4]

APPROACH

- Describe your SBDC's promotional and public awareness efforts to reach the general public and the small business community. [6.2.4.1]**
- Describe the identity program for the SBDC. How does the SBDC brand the program and services? [3.2.3 and 6.2.4.1]**

DEPLOYMENT

- Describe the production and distribution of materials and other resources (including website) for use by the small business community. [6.2.4.2]**
- Provide a copy of the policies demonstrating deployment of a statewide identity, including the use of a common logo. [3.2.3 and 6.2.4.1]**

MEASUREMENTS OF RESULTS

- Provide information in the form of brochures and other printed materials that document the separate and common identity of the SBDC. Include limited examples in the self-study guide and have additional documents available for inspection. [6.2.4]**

What the team looks for in this section:

- *How your SBDC handles values, performance expectations and client and stakeholder needs and effectively communicates to all appropriate personnel, partners and stakeholders.*
- *How your leadership system uses a defined planning process that involves directors and program leaders to develop strategy.*
- *How your SBDC leadership communicates throughout the organization and allows for communication to leadership.*
- *How the SBDC director and leadership seek information on new and improved ways of doing business and encourage all employees to do the same.*
- *How your SBDC gathers and reviews information on leadership effectiveness and then identifies opportunities for improvement.*
- *How your leadership regularly reviews results and uses those results to drive improvement.*
- *How your SBDC allocates resources to support action plans and continuous improvement.*
- *Evidence that your SBDC structure uses a formal structure with clear lines of authority, responsibility and communication.*
- *Evidence of a systematic process to evaluate operations in the areas of management education and training, counseling and information transfer.*
- *Evidence that data is methodically collected, analyzed and used in SBDC reviews to understand performance, determine cause and effect relationships and establish improvement actions.*
- *Evidence of a positive relationship between the SBDC director and the SBA district director.*
Note: *If the district director is unwilling to talk to the team, the SBA Office of Small Business Development Centers should be notified immediately.*
Note: *"District director(s) having responsibility" means responsibility for SBA operations in a geographic area (not of the SBDC).*
- *Evidence that your SBDC has a clearly defined set of measures that reflect overall performance of the organization in areas critical to its success.*

4. Human Resources

Objective:

- To enable employees to develop and use their full potential to support the SBDC's objectives
- To create a work climate that is conducive to performance excellence, empowerment, full participation and organizational growth.

Professional Staff [5.0]

APPROACH

- Describe how the professional development program for both existing and newly hired employees is designed to meet strategic resource needs as defined in your SBDC policy and strategic plan. [5.2]

DEPLOYMENT

- Provide a detailed resume of your SBDC state/regional director, the state/regional director's salary, and the average annualized salary of a full professor in the institution hosting the SBDC (or parallel positions in the agency/organization hosting the SBDC, if the SBDC is not hosted by an educational institution). [5.1.1]
- Provide a detailed resume of the assistant/associate state/regional director, the assistant/associate state/regional director's salary, and the average annualized salary of an associate professor in the institution hosting the SBDC (or the equivalent in a state institution). [5.1.1]
- Provide a summary of qualifications for each of the service center directors, their individual salaries, and the average annualized salary of an assistant professor in the institution hosting the SBDC. [5.1.1]

MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

- Report results and trends of the SBDC's human resource management system designed to lead to high performance, increased motivation, reinforced behavior, and improved results. [7.5.1]

Faculty, Students, Private-Sector Consultants and Other Resources [5.1.3 and 5.1.4]

APPROACH

- Provide a formal or informal utilization plan and/or policies demonstrating a mutually beneficial relationship between the host organization and your SBDC in using faculty, students, resources and in conducting research. [5.1.3]**

DEPLOYMENT

- Provide examples demonstrating a mutually beneficial relationship between the SBDC and the host institution. [5.1.3]**
- Provide examples of networking, linkages, cooperation and integration with private sector resources and public entities. [5.1.4]**

MEASUREMENTS OF RESULTS [7.5]

- Provide a summary of results on the value being derived by the relationship of the SBDC and the host institution. [7.5.2]**

What the team looks for in this section:

- *Evidence that leadership and supervisors support employees to achieve their full potential.*
- *How education and training for staff are linked to the achievement of the strategic plan.*
- *How your SBDC networks with other public and private organizations.*
- *Evidence that the work of volunteers, faculty, students and paid consultants are in alignment with center objectives.*
- *How employees are reinforced in their behavior and their deployment of values and plans.*
- *How you motivate employees or offer special recognition.*

5. Program Services

Objective:

- To establish a focus on work processes.
- To establish methods to design, manage and improve work processes on a continuous basis.

Counseling Services [6.1.1]

APPROACH

- Based upon your strategic plan, describe your desired target clients, their key requirements, and how your services/products address those requirements. [6.1.1]
- Describe how your SBDC implements, manages, evaluates, and improves delivery processes. [6.1.1]
- Describe the processes for assignment and monitoring of workload in order to deliver services. [6.1]

DEPLOYMENT

- Provide policies and/or describe systems designed to improve performance and assure both quality and timely counseling. [6.1.1]
- Describe how your SBDC assures the confidentiality of client information, controls conflict of interest, and ensures the fulfillment of ethical and other professional standards of conduct. [1.1.1]
- Describe how your centers address the information, statistical data and other key resources needs of small businesses. [6.1.1]
- Discuss how the SBDC: [6.1.1]
 1. Evaluates the quantity and quality of counseling,
 2. Analyzes the quality and impact of counseling,
 3. Relates counseling activity to the strategic plan,
 4. Provides counselor-based client satisfaction results,
 5. Ensures quality narrative description of counseling.

MEASUREMENTS OF RESULTS [7.6.1]

- Provide the most recent annual SBA reported counseling data and year-to-date data, including a report on recent past counseling performance and trends. [7.6.1]
- Report data on client satisfaction with counseling and success stories, noting historical trends. Describe how these results advance the strategy in the SBDC's strategic plan. [7.6.1]

TRAINING AND EDUCATION [6.1.2]

APPROACH

- Describe your SBDC's training and educational services, their alignment with the strategic plan, and the identified target markets being served. [6.1.2]**
- Describe how your SBDC designs educational programs in alignment with key needs identified. [6.1.2]**

DEPLOYMENT

- Describe the systems and policies for evaluating the quantity and quality of training and educational courses and the reporting system used to assure their high quality. [6.1.2]**
- Discuss how the SBDC: [6.1.2]**
 - 1. Evaluates the quantity and quality of training,**
 - 2. Analyzes the quality and impact of training,**
 - 3. Relates training activity to the strategic plan,**
 - 4. Obtains trainer-based client satisfaction results,**
 - 5. Identifies the key requirements of training attendees.**
- Identify the methods for monitoring and improving performance of the delivery system for training and educational services. [6.1.2]**

MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS [7.6.2]

- Provide the most recent annual SBA reported training and year-to-date data, including recent past training performance and trends. [7.6.2]**
- Provide SBDC attendee satisfaction results from training evaluations. [7.6.2]**

Special Programs [6.1.4], and Specialized and Support Services [6.2]

APPROACH

- Describe any additional identifiable programs (other than basic consulting, training, and education) provided by your SBDC. These programs may include, but are not limited to, international trade, minority, procurement, skills assessment programs, research, National Delivery System Projects, *etc.* Describe these identifiable programs in terms of delivery of information to clients, customers, stakeholders and the general public. [6.1.4]**

DEPLOYMENT

- Describe the system for evaluating the quantity and quality of additional identifiable programs and the reporting system used to assure their high quality. [6.1.3, 6.1.4, and 6.2]**
- Discuss how the SBDC: [6.1.3, 6.1.4, and 6.2]**
 - 1. Evaluates the quantity and quality of additional programs,**
 - 2. Analyzes the impact of additional programs,**
 - 3. Relates additional program activity to the strategic plan,**
 - 4. Obtains additional program director-based client satisfaction results,**
 - 5. Identifies the key requirement of additional identifiable programs.**

MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

- Provide reports on the level of service, quality and impact of your SBDC's additional identifiable programs. [7.6.4]**
- Provide a report of your SBDC's information transfer actions. [7.6.3]**

What the team looks for in this section:

- *Evidence of the quality of counseling as demonstrated on SBA 1062s. The records should clearly depict what occurred in each session. The description must be sufficient so that someone unfamiliar with the case could read the description(s) and be able to understand what occurred in the session(s) and to continue high-quality counseling based upon the description(s).*
- *Evidence that programmatic activity ties your SBDC's strategic plan.*
- *Evidence of quality in educational programming as indicated on customer satisfaction surveys.*
- *How your SBDC serves clients and through which identifiable programs client services are delivered.*

If your SBDC is also applying for Technology Accreditation you will need to obtain the listing of information requested from the ASBDC web site and complete as part of the self study.

Adopted by Accreditation Committee

April 5, 2004

February 26, 2006