Working Well With Auditees: Strategies for Effective Communication

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Audience Survey

What’s the most common reaction you get from agency staff when you arrive on scene to begin an audit?

A.  

B.  

C.
Learning Objectives

Share ideas and knowledge on how to:

• Maintain productive auditee relationships
• Communicate effectively with agencies throughout the audit process
• Teach newer audit staff these skills
In the Beginning: Auditee Communication During Planning and Survey
Entrance Conference

- **Before:** Discussion of basic audit process and logistics
- **Now:** Strategic opportunity to educate agency leadership about auditing standards and the basis for audit findings
New Entrance Conference Agenda

• Yellow Book
• Reasons for audit
• Scope areas and agency suggestions
• Audit evidence
• Next steps
Handling Tough Questions at the Entrance Conference

• Who on your team is an expert in our program field?

• Our program is not nearly as big as, say, Medicaid. Why are you spending resources to audit us?
Audience Comments

• How does your agency encourage effective agency communication at the beginning of an audit?
In the Thick of Things: Auditee Communication During Fieldwork
Build Ongoing Auditee Relationships

- Identify key staff
- Establish routine communication
- Put yourself in their shoes
Conducting and Sharing Key Analyses

• Understand what is required (criteria)
• Prepare clearing documents with agency staff in mind
• Request written responses
Fieldwork Conversations: Advice for New Auditors

• What if they like agency staff as people?

• What if they don’t like agency staff as people?
Audience Comments

How do you teach new auditors to communicate effectively with auditees during fieldwork?
When Things Get Real: Findings
Communication at the Findings Clearing

- Provide written findings in advance of formal meeting
- Prepare reactive messages
- Focus on audit evidence
- Focus on solutions
- Let agency staff vent
Defending Your Findings: Coaching New Staff on Assertiveness

• Prepare talking points ahead of time
• Trust your work
  – Yellow Book standards
  – Multiple levels of review
• Trust your knowledge of a program
• Remember that you’re not alone
Audience Comments

What advice do you have for communicating findings to auditees?
General Tips for Effective Communication with Auditees
Insights Discovery Color Analysis

THINKING
Focus on the Task

 Formal
Detached
Competitive

Informal
Considerate
Caring

Impersonal
Objective
Correct

Personal
Involved
Accommodating

Focus on the Relationship
FEELING

Focus on the Task

Personal
Involved
Accommodating
Insights Discovery Color Analysis

Eight Types Team Dynamics – Approach to Task

“Getting it done!”

“Getting it started!”

“Getting agreement!”

“Doing it correctly!”

“Doing it discreetly!”

“Doing it together!”

“Doing it now!”

“Doing it carefully!”

Compass Learning Guide – How the Eight Types Interact – Section 1.6
Methods of Communication

- Phone vs. email
- Verbal vs. writing
Dealing With Difficult Auditees

• You can’t change them; you can only change you
• Accept that some people won’t like you
• Focus on the larger purpose of your work
• Find ways to laugh about your experience
Questions or comments?