

S-COMS Self-Assessment Guide

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<https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/childoutcomes-framework.asp>

The State Child Outcomes Measurement System (S-COMS) identifies seven key components of a high-quality child outcomes measurement system at the state level.

State Part C and Part B, Section 619 programs can use the S-COMS to evaluate and improve their child outcomes measurement system. It applies to all states, regardless of [child outcomes measurement approach](#).

The S-COMS is comprised of three components:

- **State Child Outcomes Measurement System (S-COMS) Framework** – Contains background information and the framework’s 7 components, 18 quality indicators and their associated elements of quality. It provides an easy way to review the content of the S-COMS.
- **S-COMS Self-Assessment** – An Excel-based tool that provides an automated scoring form for states to rate their child outcomes measurement system on the 18 quality indicators and associated elements and to set priorities for improvement.
- **S-COMS Self-Assessment Guide** – Presents general guidance for the self-assessment process and detailed instructions on use of the self-assessment.

The contents of this tool and guidance were developed under grants from the U.S. Department of Education, #H326P120002 and #H373Z120002. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

DaSy Project Officers: Meredith Miceli, and Richelle Davis

ECTA Project Officer: Julia Martin Eile



Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

Before You Begin

We recommend identifying a team of key stakeholders to complete the self-assessment, including staff and beneficiaries of early intervention and preschool special education. States may opt to complete one or more components of the self-assessment at a time or over an extended period of time. Different sets of stakeholders may be appropriate participants for different components. If stakeholders complete it openly and thoughtfully, the self-assessment process will result in valuable discussions about the status of the current system and produce a quantitative and qualitative picture of the system's strengths and areas for improvement.

We encourage states to use the self-assessment as part of an ongoing improvement planning process in which they assess the status of their system, develop a plan for improvement, implement the plan, and reassess the system to monitor progress. When used as part of an ongoing process, reassessment enables a state to monitor and document progress toward building a quality child outcomes measurement system. Having an outcomes measurement system in place positions the state to be able to systematically use child outcomes data in implementing and improving high-quality supports and services for children and families.

Process Overview

1. Select the component(s) for which the self-assessment will be completed.
2. Identify the appropriate stakeholders to participate in the self-assessment process.
3. Gather the stakeholders and complete the self-assessment.
4. Review the self-assessment results with the stakeholders and determine priorities for improvement planning.
5. With the stakeholders, develop a plan for improvement.
6. Implement the plan for improvement.
7. Establish and maintain a continuous cycle of reassessment and improvement planning, that is, re-administer the self-assessment, identify areas of progress and new or ongoing areas for improvement, and revise the plan accordingly.

Completing the Self-Assessment

Each component contains a number of quality indicators, and each quality indicator contains a number of elements of quality.

To complete the self-assessment, stakeholders review and discuss each element, assigning it a consensus rating of 1 to 4. Read each element and discuss whether it is in place and, if so, whether it is partially or fully implemented. Elements can be partially implemented in a variety of ways.

Documenting evidence for the rating decision is important for improvement planning. Create a record of what the stakeholders considered in reaching their decision. For example, if an element was rated as partially implemented, which aspects were identified as not yet in place or of high quality?

The combination of ratings across the elements determines a rating for the associated quality indicator.

For assistance with or questions about the framework or self-assessment, contact ECTA or DaSy.

Elements of Quality Rating Scale

1. **No** – element not in place **and** not planning to work on it at this time
2. **No** – element not in place **but** planning to work on it or getting started
3. **Yes** – element partially implemented
4. **Yes** – element fully implemented

Quality Indicator Rating Scale

Unlike element ratings, quality indicator ratings are not selected by the stakeholder groups. They are calculated automatically based on element ratings. For the Self-Assessment to calculate the rating for the quality indicator, all the elements associated with it must have been assigned a rating.

“In place” means an element is fully or partially implemented. “Fully implemented” means the element is in place and of high quality.

1. None of the elements is yet planned or in place.
2. Most of the elements are not yet planned or in place.
3. Some elements are in place; a few may be fully implemented.
4. At least half of the elements are in place; a few may be fully implemented.
5. At least half of the elements are in place; some are fully implemented.
6. At least half of the elements are fully implemented; the rest are partially implemented.
7. All elements are fully implemented.

Instructions

The Self-Assessment has 12 worksheets. Seven are for rating the elements of quality for each of the seven components. The purpose of each worksheet is explained below, along with the instructions on how to use it.

Upon opening the workbook, be sure to enable the macros. There are several ways to accomplish this, depending on which version of Microsoft Excel you are using.

- **Microsoft Excel 2013:** Click on the **Enable Content** button in the yellow **Message** bar.
- **Microsoft Excel 2007 and 2010:** Go to **File, Info, Enable Content, Enable All Content**.

If you can't enable the macros through one of these methods, you may need to change a setting in your security or trust center settings.

For additional information, visit http://www.exceltrick.com/how_to/enable-macros-in-excel/

Throughout the workbook, cells that are shaded light yellow require data entry; data cannot be entered in cells shaded light blue; those cells are automatically calculated and cannot be edited.

Worksheets

Instructions

The Instructions sheet provides detailed instructions for working in the S-COMS Self-Assessment. They are provided in this document and in the first sheet of the workbook for your convenience.

Participants

This sheet is for documenting the participants involved in the self-assessment. Enter the name and/or role of each participant, and place an "X" in the cell in the component. Enter the date on which the self-assessment was completed in row 12.

Table of Contents

The **Table of Contents** sheet lists all the components of the S-COMS. There are links to each of the component worksheets. An alternative to using the links is to click on the **Worksheet** tab at the bottom of the document.

QI Summary

The QI Summary sheet displays a summary of the QI ratings for each of the QIs for which all the elements were rated. **Data cannot be entered or edited on this sheet**; it simply displays the summary data from the Element Rating worksheets. The QI ratings are displayed in column J, and the QI priority, if entered, is displayed in column K. The red, yellow, or green horizontal bars graphically depict the QI ratings.

The total number of elements in the QI is to the right of the graph. To the right of the total is the number of elements in each QI with ratings of 1, 2, 3, and 4. A summary of the number of elements with each priority is on the far right. The number of elements for each priority reflects only those elements for which a priority was selected.

Use the links at the top left of the sheet, to the right of **Jump To**, to navigate to the components in the QI Summary.

Data

The **Get Data** button (on the Instructions tab) will generate a sheet with data for current quality indicator and element ratings. If additional QIs are completed after getting the initial data, click on the Get Data button again to refresh the sheet with all current data.

There is a 10–15 second delay to generate the data sheet.

Element Rating Worksheets

Element Ratings

Each of the seven worksheets is used to rate the elements of quality for one component. Within a worksheet the elements are organized by quality indicator (QI).

In the Rating column, enter the rating for each element by entering the number (1 to 4) or by selecting the value from the dropdown list. The Element of Quality Rating scale, 1 to 4, is presented at the top directly above the rating column.

Once all element ratings for a QI are entered, the QI rating is automatically calculated and displayed in the row for the respective QI (in the light blue cell).

Several QIs—AN2, AN4, RP2, and UD2—begin with a yes/no question about whether the state has a process for systematically collecting information from local programs. If the answer is yes (the default), proceed to rate the elements that follow. A response of no will automatically result in a QI rating of 1, and the elements will be inaccessible for rating.

One element in QI DC1 (L) allows “not applicable” as a response option; the QI rating is adjusted as necessary if this is selected.

Evidence

Immediately below each element is a text box (shaded light yellow) for documenting the evidence for the element. The text box will expand to the needed length, and clicking on **Show Evidence** will resize the rows and display all the evidence; clicking on the **Hide Evidence** button will hide all the rows. Thus, the Element Rating worksheets may be viewed and/or printed with or without the evidence displayed.

At the top of each sheet is a link back to the **Table of Contents** and buttons that make it easy to navigate to each QI.

Priority

To the right of each cell for the element rating and QI rating is a cell to indicate the **Priority** of each element and QI. The priority rating is an optional feature and may be used for planning which elements or QIs to work on.

The priority options are high, medium, or low, or this cell may be left blank. The priority designation may be entered by typing L, M, or H (lower or upper case) or by using the drop-down list. We recommend states rate the elements of quality for all components that will be completed and then go back and assign the priority. This allows the stakeholders to get an overall view of strengths and areas of need across multiple QIs and elements.

Results

The S-COMS Self-Assessment creates a profile that includes a summary of the numerical ratings and a graph of the results. The bars in the graph are color coded to indicate the relative strengths and weaknesses across the quality indicators in each of the completed components.

Although the self-assessment will highlight system strengths and weaknesses, it is not a road map that specifies where to start or what to do next. The state must determine where to direct improvement efforts based on its priorities and resources. After reviewing the overall results for the quality indicators, the stakeholders should determine the priority areas for improvement. To record priorities, the state can refer to the worksheet for each of the components completed. The Self-Assessment provides for priority ratings of low, medium, or high to be assigned to the elements of quality, the quality indicators, or both. The priorities assigned in the component worksheets are summarized on the QI Summary sheet. An improvement plan can be developed based on the profile and the priorities assigned by the stakeholders.

Saving and Printing

Because the S-COMS Self-Assessment is an Excel workbook, it needs to be saved just like any other workbook. We recommend saving the file with the date it was completed in the file name (e.g., **s-coms-sa-2026-10-22.xlsx**) and then saving it with a new dated file name if you complete more components later. Save the file often while you are working in it.

Each worksheet in the workbook has a default print area set up. To redefine or resize the print area, use the **Print Area** option in the Excel **Page Layout** tab.