

WORLD CLASS LEARNING SYSTEMS

ALBEMARLE COUNTY QUALITY RECOGNITION PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

Albemarle County is dedicated to maintaining the County's stature as a quality community by promoting the values of education and lifelong learning. Toward that end Albemarle County's strategic plan has as one of four strategic directions *to provide high quality educational opportunities for Albemarle County citizens of all ages*. Four goals have been identified to help accomplish that aim, including positioning the County as a recognized leader in educational excellence.

Programs, systems, and organizations that promote education and lifelong learning are important community resources that add to the rich fabric of our community. However, such programs must be effective and of high quality. With so much competition for public and foundation money, programs and organizations must demonstrate and document that the money they receive is doing what it is supposed to—helping individuals gain the skills, knowledge and abilities required to meet their individual goals. And even if your program does not compete for funds, being recognized for the quality of your delivery system is value you bring to your customers.

The *County's Quality Recognition Program* can help your education and lifelong learning program meet research-based standards of program quality and learn how to measure and document performance outcomes. The standards around which the Quality Recognition Program is organized reflect both current research and years of practical experience from exemplary local programs.

In an effort to promote quality and educational excellence in all institutional and community settings that offer learning opportunities, the County has created a **Quality Life Long Learning Recognition Award and Certification** process. This system is being designed to promote a set of Quality Standards against which any organization can benchmark its current approaches and practices. The system has two levels of recognition:

Level 1: An Award. This level includes conducting a self assessment and a nomination process. Based on the self assessment and the nomination, a review committee will identify organizations whose 'promising practices' should be awarded the **Life Long Learning Quality Practices Award**. Organizations at this level will receive a Certificate of Recognition.

Level 2: Certification. This level includes conducting a self assessment, completing an application and a site visit. Based on the self assessment, application, and site visit a review committee will certify that an organization has the processes and practices in place to continuously improve their education and learning delivery system. Organizations at this level will be certified, receive a plaque, and receive permission to use the County's brand/logo as a **Center of Learning Excellence**. Initial certification will be renewable at two years and every five years thereafter.

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WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Any public, private, for profit, not for profit organization delivering education and learning services. This package is designed to assist each site in examining where they are regarding the quality criteria and to promote continuous improvement toward the criteria. It can be utilized for a single program within and organization or with an organization as a whole.

THE BENEFITS

The specificity of the criteria is helpful to an organization that wants to make improvements to their delivery system and structure but might not know where to begin. An organization can use the Award or the Certification to approach potential funders. Finally, having received an award or been certified is a marketing tool that can be used to attract customers.

THE PROCESS

Award: There is a two-step process for being awarded the **Life Long Learning Quality Practices Award**. The first is completion of the *Self-Evaluation*. The second is completion of the *Nomination Process*.

Certification: There is a three-step process for becoming certified as a **Center of Learning Excellence**. The first is completion of the *Self-Evaluation*. The second is the completion of an *Application Process*. The third is an *On-Site Review*. These certification standards are set high. Support is available through training and technical assistance to assist those interested in achieving the required level of quality.

The Self Assessment Process

Self-assessment strategies represent a common category of approaches used in the U.S. to document quality of products, institutions and programs. While self-assessment does not replace other forms of documenting quality such as the use of control group evaluations, these processes have roots in both the public and private sectors. The national emphasis on quality standards and excellence in schools and the workplace has been embraced by nearly every field including business, health care, and education. Common uses of self-assessment include its utility to:

- *Recognize institutions.*
- *Recognize programs.*
- *Recognize products and services*
- *Promote quality.*
- *Provide national affiliation and recognition.*
- *Promote programs supported by state/federal government*

Specifically, the purpose of this self evaluation is to:

- Prioritize areas for improvement within your program and/or organization,
- Identify the impacts of the system on the quality of the processes and outcomes,
and
- Develop a shared Action Plan for improvements, called a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan.

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USING THE SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

This self assessment tool can help your organization and the programs designed to provide instruction and to promote life long learning meet research-based standards of program quality and learn how to measure and document performance outcomes. The standards around which the self assessment is organized reflect both current research and years of best practice experience from exemplary learning programs.

Audience

Using the enclosed Self-Evaluation tool, the staff that manage, administrate, or deliver instruction for the organization are expected to discuss, as a team, each of the standards and indicators. The program being assessed may be a “stand-alone” effort, part of a multi-site operation, or an initiative of a larger organization whose mission is broader than teaching and learning for adults in the community.

The Self Assessment

From the results of this organizational assessment, a program/organization can determine its strengths and areas needing attention or improvement. This information can be used to develop strategies for program improvement.

The Self Assessment examines a program’s strengths and opportunities for improvement in comparison to eleven quality standards, which are organized into three categories: 1) *Management for Quality*, 2) *Programmatic Approach to Learning*, and 3) *Results*.

- **MANAGEMENT FOR QUALITY** addresses the organizational elements and systems that provide the foundation for a quality program. Without these elements in place, a program cannot be effective.
- **PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH** addresses the elements underlying the design of a comprehensive, holistic program
- **RESULTS** address how successful a program is in reaching its performance goals related to a core set of outcomes and in comparison to relevant benchmarks.

Indicators

Each of the 11 standards has at least one “indicator” of quality. There is a difference between an **indicator** and a **practice**.

An **indicator** is a sign that leads one to believe that something else exists or is present. A **practice** is an activity, element, or structure in your program that provide evidence towards an indicator.

“Program regularly seeks out the opinions of learners on their teaching and learning experience” is an indicator of program engages learners as active, valued contributors under the standard for Teaching, Curricula, and Feedback.

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“We have an advisory group ” and *“learners teach each other”* **are practices** that would provide evidence of meeting the indicator.

As you go through the Self Assessment, think about specific **practices**—activities, elements, or structures in your program—that provide evidence toward each indicator.

The indicators are rather general for a reason—learning systems are not “one size fits all” efforts. Each program or initiative designs activities appropriate for the community and learner it serves, its mission, and its resources. For example, not every quality program has to have an advisory group from the community or made up of learners. But every quality program must have activities that seek to create opportunities for learners to be advisors and teachers as well as learners.

The County is committed to developing a system of life long learning for citizens that is known for the highest level of quality and that consistently exceed our customers expectations for getting what they need when they need it. To ensure that any organization that displays our brand as a Center for Learning Excellence is a high performing and quality site, the County assures its customers of a rigorous certification process based on the following commitments:

- ❑ Organizations must agree that certification is representational of the highest quality standards in the delivery of teaching and learning.
- ❑ Based on this commitment, any entity wishing certification must be able to demonstrate processes and products that meet or exceed the following set of quality standards based upon Malcolm Baldrige Award criteria.
- ❑ Attainment of the standards and a rigorous certification process provides an assurance to the public that the certified site has attained a high standard of quality and consistently maintains that standard.

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SELF ASSESSMENT

INSTRUCTIONS

Please carefully read through the following explanation of the rating system for the Self Assessment. As you read each indicator under the standards in the self assessment, please select the rating that most closely matches your perception of where your learning program is currently with respect to meeting the specific indicator.

| RATING OPTIONS | SELECT THIS RATING IF... | ANOTHER WAY TO THINK ABOUT THE RATING... <i>(This may only be applicable to some indicators)</i> |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Not Evident | Currently no practices are in place or under development that meet this indicator. There is no systemic approach. | The program is currently meeting the indicator <i>zero percent</i> of the time. |
| Emerging | The organization is beginning to discuss the indicator and an implementation plan is developing. | The program is currently meeting the indicator <i>less than 25 percent</i> of the time. |
| Capable | Implementation has begun and some practices are in place. The organization is competent at the minimal levels but there is room for great growth. | The program is currently meeting the indicator <i>25–50 percent</i> of the time. |
| Proficient | Implementation is well underway and several organizational practices are in place. The approaches are sound and being deployed systemically. | The program is currently meeting the indicator <i>51-75 percent</i> of the time. |
| Advanced | The indicator is fully implemented and saturated and many organizational practices are in place. This indicator has an affect on all people and operations throughout the organization. | The program is currently meeting the indicator <i>over 75 - 100 percent</i> of the time. |

THE RATING

Descriptions of an organization’s approach to each quality standard should be reviewed against:

- How it assists with improving performance, how the organization understands the link to outcome measures
- What continuous improvement strategies are in place to improve on the criteria
- How saturated throughout the organization the strategies are
- Demonstration of the use of data for each indicator.

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| Category I MANAGEMENT FOR QUALITY <i>The standards in this category address the organizational elements and systems that provide the foundation for a quality learning program.</i> | Not Evident | Emerging | Capable | Proficient | Advanced | Priority |
|--|-------------|----------|---------|------------|----------|----------|
| MISSION: The program has a clearly stated purpose that is consistent with its goals and activities and is based on the needs of the community and customers it serves. | | | | | | |
| Indicators | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The written mission statement accurately reflects the purpose of the program as it relates to the needs of customers and the community.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Staff, board members, customers, and partners can easily articulate the purpose of the program.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Staff, customers, and other appropriate stakeholders periodically revisit the mission to ensure its continued relevance.</i> | | | | | | |
| LEADERSHIP: The program maintains strong, engaged, competent, and committed leadership. | | | | | | |
| Indicators | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Roles and responsibilities of leadership positions are clear and not repetitive.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Senior staff have the relevant experiences and credentials to support the program's mission.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The board of directors reflects a diversity of backgrounds and skills to support the program's mission.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Structures are in place to cultivate and nurture leadership.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Program leaders inspire and motivate staff to contribute, learn, and be innovative.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Program leaders take advantage of new opportunities and develop effective responses to potential challenges.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The program has an effective internal system of two-way communication and feedback between senior leadership and staff.</i> | | | | | | |

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|--|-------------|----------|---------|------------|----------|----------|
| STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS : Program staff and volunteers are qualified for their assigned responsibilities, are committed to the program’s purpose, and engage in ongoing professional development appropriate to program goals. | | | | | | |
| Indicators | | | | | | |
| • <i>The qualifications for individual positions are clear and appropriate.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The staff reflects a diversity of backgrounds to support the program’s mission</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program ensures that current and newly hired staff either has or acquire the necessary competencies to contribute to program success.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>Staff demonstrates an awareness of and sensitivity to the needs and culture of the community.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>Staff demonstrates a culture of respect and teamwork.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program provides staff training and career development opportunities that are appropriate to each position and support the achievement of the program’s overall objectives.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>Staff training promotes continuity of staff and reduces turnover.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>Goals for staff performance are set and regularly assessed.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>Compensation, career progress, and other personnel practices contribute to high performance.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program nurtures promotion from within.</i> | | | | | | |
| ACCOUNTABILITY : The program sets strategic goals, converts its goals into measurable outcomes and action plans, and monitors and measures its progress and performance results. | | | | | | |
| Indicators | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program establishes strategic goals and creates action plans for how it will achieve its goals.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program engages Board members, senior leaders, staff, customers, and other appropriate stakeholders in goal-setting, planning and evaluation.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program sets measurable outcomes for learner’s achievement and program success.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program identifies and monitors progress measures that indicate progress made toward specific outcomes.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program compares its outcomes to relevant comparative data (e.g. benchmarks) where available and conducts external evaluations when feasible.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program communicates solid information about the results of its activities internally and externally.</i> | | | | | | |

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|--|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| INFORMATION MANAGEMENT: The program collects, analyzes, and documents a range of data regarding program operations and participant demographics, services, and progress. | | | | | | |
| Indicators | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The program has a user-friendly and effective process for collecting data on individual customers and program activities.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Staff uses the information management system to measure individual learner's progress and to prepare internal and external reports.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The program can easily and accurately describe who it is serving, the kinds of activities and services each learner is receiving, and what these services accomplish.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Procedures are in place to follow and collect data on the learner's progress after they leave the program</i> | | | | | | |
| CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: The program is committed to a strategy to enhance its overall performance and future success. | | | | | | |
| Indicators | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Systems are in place to regularly gather and use information and feedback from staff, customers, funders, community members, and other stakeholders in improvement efforts.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Data on the individual learners, program activities and outcomes are reflected upon and used to inform operational and programmatic improvement.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Knowledge is shared throughout the organization.</i> | | | | | | |

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|---|-------------|----------|---------|------------|----------|----------|
| RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: The program attracts stable and diverse funding and in-kind support. | | | | | | |
| <i>Indicators</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The program has both long- and short-term funding plans to support the mission and goals of the program.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The program keeps current and prospective funders informed about what is happening in the program and about program successes.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The program has a marketing and public information strategy.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The program builds relationships with funding resources, civic, business and community leaders, policymakers and policymaking bodies.</i> | | | | | | |
| CONGRUITY: The mission shapes the program’s structure, activities, and other offerings. | | | | | | |
| <i>Indicators</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>All aspects of the program form a coherent strategy for supporting and accomplishing the mission.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The allocation of the budget and other resources supports the mission.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The program can change or expand activities to meet shifting needs of the community while continuing to support its mission.</i> | | | | | | |

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| Category II | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|----------|---------|------------|----------|----------|
| PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH TO LEARNING <i>The standards in this category address the elements underlying the design of a comprehensive teaching and learning system and environment.</i> | Not Evident | Emerging | Capable | Proficient | Advanced | Priority |
| ENVIRONMENT/CULTURE: The program offers a structured environment that supports and sustains a learners own goals for success. | | | | | | |
| Indicators | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The program environment is collaborative between learners and instructors and peer to peer.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The program conducts ongoing outreach to the community to identify potential resources and partners.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The organization conducts ongoing outreach to potential participants.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The environment reflects learners’ interests and uses those interests to motivate the learner.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Set learning goals are based on appropriate needs assessments.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The program is physically and programmatically accessible, e.g. the physical space, programs and services are designed in a way that allows both individuals with and individuals without disabilities to participate and benefit fully.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The program requires that participants have total and equal opportunity for participation.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The program is responsive to diverse styles of learning by using active learning methods</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The program environment easily adapts to learners’ needs.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The program is flexible in how it delivers instruction through a variety of teaching and learning methods.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The program provides opportunities for social interaction among the learners.</i> | | | | | | |
| RELEVANT LEARNING: The program promotes learning that is authentic and has a genuine purpose providing learners with connections between the educational environment, home, and the community. | | | | | | |
| Indicators | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learners construct knowledge and meaning, linking previous and new knowledge to current and future applications.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learners are actively engaged in the learning process, setting goals and direction based on multiple learning styles.</i> | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learners have opportunities to apply new knowledge in integrative ways through projects, teaching others, use at work, in the community or other avenues promoted by the program.</i> | | | | | | |

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| Category II | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|----------|---------|------------|----------|----------|
| PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH TO LEARNING <i>The standards in this category address the elements underlying the design of a comprehensive teaching and learning system and environment.</i> | Not Evident | Emerging | Capable | Proficient | Advanced | Priority |
| TEACHING, CURRICULA AND FEEDBACK: The program, on its own or through collaborations, engages learners in activities that develop academic skills, other forms of knowledge, competencies, and credentials. | | | | | | |
| Indicators | | | | | | |
| • <i>Assessment measures are appropriate to their intended use.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program uses the assessments to develop learning goals for each individual participant.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program provides opportunities for participants to periodically meet to discuss and reflect on progress and achievement (project, individual, group)</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The curriculum has real world application, is focused on meaningful content, and has a genuine purpose</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program provides learners with opportunities to demonstrate and communicate competencies, skills, and knowledge in multiple ways.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program has a structure to align and monitor the quality of services learners receive and a process to provide feedback and make improvements to the teaching and learning system.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program engages learners as active, valued contributors.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program strives to use learning as a way to transform learners, providing opportunities to be resources and contributors to the program and community.</i> | | | | | | |
| • <i>The program promotes self- confidence and a sense of self-worth through the development of knowledge and skills.</i> | | | | | | |

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**ALBEMARLE COUNTY QUALITY RECOGNITION
PROGRAM**

**APPLICATION FOR AWARD
To Obtain the Life Long Learning Quality Practices
Award**

*To be Submitted to the Award Review Committee
For the period July 2005 thru June 2006*

Mail or Deliver 5 copies and 1 signed original to:

[INSERT ADDRESS]

NO FAXES OR E-MAILS ACCEPTED

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**AWARD NOMINATION FORM
LIFE LONG LEARNING QUALITY PRACTICES AWARD**

Name of Organization: _____
Name of Contact Person: _____
Organization Address: _____
Phone: _____

Individual making the
Nomination: _____

Self Assessment
Completion Date: _____

This is a:

? **Self Nomination:** Self nominations are from the organization or an individual (staff or volunteers) within the organization.

? **Independent Nomination:** Independent nominations are from individuals who are not employed by or a volunteer with the organization they are nominating. They may be a partner.

Qualifying Questions

1. Please describe the organization's best practices with regard to the Quality Standards found in the Self Assessment Tool. Provide appropriate documentation of those practices. Not more than 250 words.

2. Please describe the organization's plan to continue to improve toward the standards. Not more than 250 words.

I am pleased to attest to this organization's progress in promoting quality learning practices.
Signature: _____

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**ALBEMARLE COUNTY QUALITY RECOGNITION
PROGRAM**

**APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION
To become a Center for Learning Excellence**

*To be Submitted to the Certification Subcommittee
For the period July 2006 thru June 2007*

Mail or Deliver 5 copies and 1 signed original to:

[INSERT ADDRESS]

NO FAXES OR E-MAILS ACCEPTED

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**CERTIFICATION APPLICATION FORM
CENTER OF LEARNING EXCELLENCE**

I. MANAGEMENT FOR QUALITY

Mission and Congruity

- A. Describe the process for developing the mission of the organization. Include key steps and key participants. Describe the process for reviewing it periodically.
- B. Describe how all aspects of the program are aligned to the mission of the organization.
- C. Describe how the mission drives resource allocation.

Leadership

- A. Describe how the Leadership of the organization sets and deploys organizational values, short and long term strategic directions, and performance expectations. How do leaders communicate values, direction, and performance expectations throughout to all employees?
- B. How do senior leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation and employee learning?
- C. How does the organization measure the effectiveness of its Leadership? Summarize the organization's goals and objectives and how they are implemented in ways that support the vision and values.
- D. Describe how top Leadership uses customer data and other performance data. How does the Leadership translate this information into priorities for improvement and opportunities for innovation?

Staff and Volunteers

- A. Describe how your employee performance management system, including feedback to employees, supports high performance and a customer focus.
- B. Describe your approach to employee development. Provide your staff turnover rate for the last two years.
- C. Identify and describe the organization's structure and how this structure promotes empowering employees and team based problem solving.
- D. Describe how you determine your employees' well-being, satisfaction, and motivation. How do you make improvements based on this information?
- E. Describe how you promote cultural diversity within the organization?

Accountability

- A. Describe the strategic planning process for the organization. Include key steps, key participants, and long and short-term timeframes. Attach the part of the strategic plan that identifies your vision, mission, customers, goals and objectives.
- B. Outline how relevant data and information are gathered and analyzed with regard to the strategic planning process.
- D. Describe how you are raising awareness of the program in your community.
- E. Describe the benchmarking process used and improvements and innovations

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- put in place as a result.
- F. How do you measure outcomes?

Information Management and Continuous Improvement

- A. Describe how all levels of staff are involved in the data collection process and how improvement data is used from the desk level to the policy level.
- B. Describe how you gather and integrate data and information from all sources to support daily operations, organizational decision-making, and how the collected data is linked to continuous improvement efforts.
- C. Describe how you listen to your customers (all customer groups) and learn about their key requirements and the relative importance of these requirements.
- D. What is the current satisfaction rate against these key elements?
- E. Describe how you deal with customer complaints and how the complaints become part of the feedback loop for improvements.

Resource Management

- A. Describe the programs funding and plans for future diversification and stability.

II. PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES TO LEARNING

Environment/Culture

- A. Describe the learning environment and how it promotes collaboration among learners and between learners and instructors.
- B. Describe the learning environment and how it is accessible to all learners.
- C. Describe how the learning environment helps to motivate learners.

Relevant Learning

- A. Describe how learners are actively engaged in the learning process.
- B. Describe how learning strategies link previous and new knowledge to current and future applications
- C. Describe how the learning system promotes application of new knowledge and skills.

Teaching, Curricula and Feedback

- A. Identify and describe the core services available and the processes used to ensure access by customers.
- B. Describe how learners' needs are assessed and plans are developed based on learner interest, need, and skills.
- C. Describe the various learning strategies used to ensure attention to different learning styles.