Writing an Application – Helpful Hints

Helpful Hint #1:
There are many ways to write an application; using a team approach does help.

Helpful Hint #2:
Write the Organizational Profile early. You need the information to help you create terminology guidelines. It sets the stage for the application. Finally, it creates a common view for all of what is important.

Helpful Hint #3:
Create two critical tables/figures early.
- Mission, vision, values, and key drivers
- Strategic Plan (Category 2) table of key drivers, action plans, measures, targets, and comparative data

These tables provide a guide to address and describe your organization's most important processes.

Helpful Hint #4:
Get a "visual" person to help you:
- Flowcharts help answer "how" in a structured manner
- Tables and flowcharts help organize your thoughts
- Graphs help organize your data and results

Helpful Hint #5:
Avoid:
- Abbreviations
- Acronyms
- Jargon
- Non-specific words like "periodically", "regularly", "encourage", "could"

Helpful Hint #6:
Identify your organization's "WOWs!" – make sure they come out strong and early, but avoid bullet lists that are not supported by facts and data.

Helpful Hint #7:
Do Category 7 (Results) early – it drives the process descriptions in Categories 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Helpful Hint #8
Writing Process Hints - Getting Started:
- Use common software and formatting.
- Drafts should be done in two-column format with figures and tables integrated with the text
- Determine a central point for input (file server or data base) that is accessible by all team members
- Use e-mail for communication
- Develop milestones for key events, such as the first draft, second draft, executive management review, and final document

Helpful Hint #9

Writing Process Hints:

- Write in terms an outsider to your organization and sector can understand
- Write in terms of processes, not activities
- Use the questions from the Criteria to help you define what information you need to gather
- Understand the Criteria requirements before you start writing
- Refer back to the Criteria questions frequently while writing
- Write in a positive tone
- Be honest and factual
- Do not get overly concerned about length initially – but do not write a novel either

Helpful Hint #10

Writing Process Hints:

- Be prepared to prove every statement you make
- As you write, develop a list of opportunities
    - Documented issues and improvement ideas
    - Address some of these opportunities before the site visit
    - Develop an action plan and update it when the feedback report is received from the examiners

Helpful Hint #11

Writing Process Hints:

- Read and understand the Sterling Core Values
- Read and understand the Scoring System

Helpful Hint #12

Writing Process Hints:

- Use the questions to gather information
- Write a draft
- Have subject matter experts review the draft for completeness and accuracy