HOW TO GUIDE 4 – GUIDE TO GOOD EVIDENCE

This guide explains how to gather good evidence to support your self-assessment. The main topics covered are:

- Building your organisation's evidence base

    o Types of evidence
    o Quality of evidence
    o Systematic evidence
- Examples of evidence

- Common issues with evidence.

BUILDING YOUR ORGANISATION'S EVIDENCE BASE

Regardless of the tools you choose to do the self-assessment it will involve identifying, linking and collating your evidence.

This the first step in establishing your evidence base for ASES accreditation. The second and final step is the evidence that the External Assessor will observe and collect during your external assessment site visit.

For each piece of evidence you need to decide whether to include and submit it with your self-assessment, or whether it is best saved for the site visit.

In making these decisions, consider the following:

- Is it documented evidence that can easily be provided to the External Assessor via electronic upload or saving to a flash drive? Generally, the types of evidence that are provided with the self-assessment are policies, procedures, plans, stakeholder survey reports, registers and audit reports.

- Is it feasible or possible to physically provide the evidence via upload, or is it better provided at the site visit? For example, the SPP BNG Portal does not allow for the upload of video or audio files.

- Does the evidence contain personal or private information about a person, or confidential information about an organisation? This kind of evidence is best kept for the site visit.

You can note in your self-assessment where a piece of evidence will be provided at the site visit and not attached to the assessment.

Types of evidence

The evidence submitted and considered in accreditation assessments is generally in one of the following five broad categories:

Documentary – any evidence that is on paper and not verbal. Examples are policies, procedures, client files, staff files, meeting minutes, posters, flyers, letters, written contracts.

Digital – a subset of documentary evidence that is in digital form. Examples are client databases, financial and other data systems, electronic filing systems, emails, apps, social media, DVDs, Mp3s, website.

Verbal/observational – observed evidence of conversations, interviews and testimonials. Examples are **interviews** with staff, the Board, the management team, clients and client representatives and partner organisations. **Observations** of conversations and interactive behaviour among staff and between staff and clients.

Some interviews with clients and partner organisations can also be similar to testimonials, (i.e. people voluntarily sharing their experience about their contact and history with the service).

Physical/observational – most commonly this takes the form of the External Assessor observing the physical environment. Examples include tours of the facilities, the WH&S induction at the start of the Assessor's visit, observation of the physical environment, observation of how staff and clients relate to and interact with the physical environment.

Artefacts and symbols – objects or symbols that express the values and purpose of the organisation. Examples include Aboriginal flags and signage, word carvings capturing the values of the organisation that are displayed in the organisation, the 'tree of life' symbol to show the strategic direction of an organisation.

Quality of evidence

Good quality evidence has several characteristics. It must be:

- Relevant – relates to the practice under examination

- Current – recent enough to confirm the practice still exists

- Reliable – delivers consistent results over time

- Corroborated – supported by more than one source

- Systematic – part of a demonstrable system of work (see below)

- Sustainable – able to be practiced over the long term

Systematic evidence

To establish that evidence is systematic, consider whether:

1. The system is described in **writing**

2. The system is **evident in practice**

3. Those who are affected by the **system know about it**

4. The system is **evaluated**/monitored/reviewed

5. The **responsibility** or responsibilities for the system are **assigned**?

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

Evidence does not need to be paper-based or printed evidence. It can include artefacts, digital records, audio or video recordings and web-based evidence as shown in the list below.

- Fire safety audits
- WHS worksite inspection records
- Staff surveys
- Client record audits
- Client satisfaction surveys
- Membership of peak bodies
- Board meeting minutes
- Budget reports
- Newsletters
- Complaints register
- Sample contracts
- Consumer Reference Group Minutes
- Risk Management Plans
- Welcome packs for clients
- Organisational website
- Organisational social media posts

- Program evaluations
- Financial audits
- Reports against Strategic Plan
- Board evaluations
- Interagency meeting minutes
- Staff meeting minutes
- Annual operation plan
- Communiques to staff
- Recordings of yarning sessions
- Maintenance schedules
- Sample MOUs
- Workplans for CEO, staff, Board
- Compliance registers
- Information on notice boards (e.g., a human rights poster, anti-bullying poster)
- Client feedback on an iPad app
- Asset register

- Regular reports to the funding body
- Program reviews that involved client participation

- Documents for the last tender that the organisation undertook
- An example of where a complaint led to a change of policy or practice

COMMON ISSUES WITH EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS IN ASES

A 2019 baseline analysis of the quality of evidence uploaded into the SPP BNG portal by SHSs highlighted some significant issues including:

- Evidence that is 3+ years old
- Policies that were undated, unauthorised or expired due to exceeding their review dates
- Policies that did not always link to relevant legislation
- Excellent templates and planning tools but often no confirmation they were in use
- Evidence 'bulked up' with documents not relevant to that requirement
- Titles used by organisations to describe their evidence were not sufficient to describe the content of the document
- Track changes were evident in policy and other documents which deflect from the content.

These findings applied equally across small, medium and large organisations.