

Message Development and Report Writing (8 hours)

Course Overview

Turning audit work into a finely honed, impactful message can be a challenge for audit teams and reviewers. For audit teams, it may be difficult to discern the most critical findings and evidence, which then complicates reviewers' efforts to understand a potential message and provide feedback. Because report findings must be communicated clearly and on time to be useful to agencies and policy makers, not having a strong report message before starting to draft the report creates confusion, time delays and frustration for both the writer and reader. This course provides guidance and tools and techniques to help audit teams efficiently develop and communicate sound messages that meet standards, are clear to reviewers, and facilitate the development of a high-quality report. This course is offered over 2 half days.

CPEs: 8

Who Should Attend

Both new as well as seasoned auditors in team leader or team member roles will gain knowledge and new perspectives about the stages of message development, tools for developing findings, and the principles for clearly communicating audit findings.

Course Objectives

Participants will be able to

- Understand how the audit objective(s) and findings shape the report message
- Follow the stages of message development
- Identify and assess the message emerging from the data
- Work effectively within the audit team and with other stakeholders in the audit organization to reach agreement on the report message
- More clearly communicate audit findings in written reports

Course Topics

Characteristics of a Quality Report

- What makes a quality report
- Elements of a finding
 - Criteria, Condition, Cause, and Effect
- Types of audit questions/objectives

Moving from Data to Message

- The stages of message development
 - Audit planning, selecting researchable questions

- Gathering evidence, analyzing data, developing findings
 - Developing a sound message
 - Completing an outline and reaching message agreement
- Tools and approaches for developing findings
 - Role of visuals
 - Periodic reviews
 - Findings matrix
 - Writing on walls
- Importance of building high-performing audit teams

Communicating Audit Results

- The writing process
 - Planning
 - Writing
 - Revising
 - Polishing
- Reader-based vs. writer-based writing techniques
- Key writing principles
 - Give readers answers to questions
 - Give readers a map to the answers
 - Tell readers the significance of information before providing the details
- Inductive vs. deductive writing