

The Readiness for Organizational Learning and Evaluation Instrument (ROLE)¹

Purpose

This instrument is designed to help an organization determine its level of readiness for implementing organizational learning and evaluation practices and processes that support it. The instrument's results can be used to:

- Identify the existence of learning organization characteristics
- Diagnose interest in conducting evaluation that facilitates organizational learning
- Identify areas of strength to leverage evaluative inquiry processes
- Identify areas in need of organizational change and development.

The organization may use the results to focus its efforts on improving or further strengthening areas that will lead to greater individual, team, and organizational learning.

Background and Rationale

In an effort to respond to internal and external demands for growth and success, many organizations have adopted the goal of becoming a learning organization. Organizational learning is a continuous process of organizational growth and improvement that (a) is integrated with work activities; (b) invokes the alignment of values, attitudes, and perceptions among organizational members; and (c) uses information or feedback about both processes and outcomes to make changes. Evaluation conducted in support of organizational learning provides a means for (a) developing a community of inquirers, (b) harnessing the intellectual capital of its members, and (c) addressing problems and/or opportunities that face the organization. Implementing organizational learning and evaluation efforts, however, is not an easy task. It requires that the organization carefully assess how prepared its structures, policies, procedures, and members are to support organizational learning and evaluation practices.

Description of the Instrument

The items on this instrument reflect the research on organizational learning and evaluation processes and practices. The results from this body of research suggest that an organization must have certain elements of its infrastructure in place if it is to truly support and encourage organizational learning. Research on the use of evaluation findings has also shown that the organization's culture and context significantly influence the extent to which evaluation findings are used to support learning and decision making.

The ROLE consists of questions grouped into six major dimensions. These include: *Culture, Leadership, Systems and Structures, Communication, Teams, and Evaluation*. Three additional questions are included to provide information about the respondent and the organization. Respondents are asked to respond to 75 Likert scale items on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "Strongly Disagree," and 5 meaning "Strongly Agree," three yes/no items, and three multiple choice items.²

¹ Based on the book: Preskill, H. & Torres, R. T. (1999). *Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. For more information about the survey, please contact Hallie Preskill at hallie.preskill@fsg.org

² Reliability data for the instrument can be found in: Preskill, H., Torres, R. T., & Martinez-Papponi, B. (1999). *Assessing an organization's readiness for learning from evaluative inquiry*. Paper presented at the American Evaluation Association annual conference. Orlando, FL, November.

When administering the instrument with organization members, it is important to emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers. What matters most is their opinion based on their experiences. Use of the instrument is most effective when the people respond honestly and the organization treats individuals' responses confidentially. We recommend that the results for all respondents be aggregated and reported in summary form. The instrument can be administered to single or multiple departments within an organization, or to the entire organization.

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Directions

Before you begin responding to the items, please check one of the two boxes below to indicate whether you will be thinking about the organization as a whole, or your department /unit as the focus for your ratings. Base this decision on the entity with which you are most familiar. For example, if you are part of a large department it probably makes sense to respond in terms of your department. On the other hand, if you are very familiar with the organization as a whole, you can respond in terms of the organization.

- ☐ I will be thinking about the entire organization.
☐ I will be thinking about my department/unit.

For each of the items below, circle the number that best represents your opinion based on your experiences, and not on how you think other individuals would answer, or your organization's official policy or intent.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

Culture

Collaboration and Problem Solving

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Employees respect each other's perspectives and opinions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Employees ask each other for information about work issues and activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Employees continuously look for ways to improve processes, products and services. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Employees are provided opportunities to think about and reflect on their work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Employees often stop to talk about the pressing work issues we're facing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. When trying to solve problems, employees use a process of working through the problem before identifying solutions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. There is little competition among employees for recognition or rewards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Employees operate from a spirit of cooperation, rather than competition. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
9. Employees tend to work collaboratively with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Employees are more concerned about how their work contributes to the success of the organization than they are about their individual success.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Employees face conflict over work issues in productive ways.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Employees generally view problems or issues as opportunities to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Risk Taking</i>					
13. Mistakes made by employees are viewed as opportunities for learning.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Employees continuously ask themselves how they're doing, what they can do better, and what is working.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Employees are willing to take risks in the course of their work.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Employees are committed to being innovative and forward looking.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Employees are confident that mistakes or failures will not affect them negatively.	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Participatory Decision Making</i>					
18. Employees generally trust their managers or supervisors.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Managers and supervisors view individuals' capacity to learn as the organization's greatest resource.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Employees use data/information to inform their decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Asking questions and raising issues about work is encouraged.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Employees are not afraid to share their opinions even if those opinions are different from the majority.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I feel safe explaining to others why I think or feel the way I do about an issue.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Employees are encouraged to take the lead in initiating change or in trying to do something different.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Managers and supervisors make decisions after considering the input of those affected.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	
26. In meetings employees are encouraged to discuss the values and beliefs that underlie their opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	
27. Employees are encouraged to offer dissenting opinions and alternative viewpoints.	1	2	3	4	5	

Leadership

28. Managers and supervisors admit when they don't know the answer to a question.	1	2	3	4	5	
29. Managers and supervisors take on the role of coaching, mentoring and facilitating employees' learning.	1	2	3	4	5	
30. Managers and supervisors help employees understand the value of experimentation and the learning that can result from such endeavors.	1	2	3	4	5	
31. Managers and supervisors make realistic commitments for employees (e.g., time, resources, workload).	1	2	3	4	5	
32. Managers and supervisors understand that employees have different learning styles and learning needs.	1	2	3	4	5	
33. Managers and supervisors are more concerned with serving the organization than with seeking personal power or gain.	1	2	3	4	5	
34. Managers and supervisors are open to negative feedback from employees.	1	2	3	4	5	
35. Managers and supervisors model the importance of learning through their own efforts to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	
36. Managers and supervisors believe that our success depends upon learning from daily practices.	1	2	3	4	5	
37. Managers and supervisors support the sharing of knowledge and skills among employees.	1	2	3	4	5	
38. Managers and supervisors provide the necessary time and support for systemic, long-term change.	1	2	3	4	5	
39. Managers and supervisors use data/information to inform their decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5	

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	

Systems and Structures

Open and Accessible Work Environment

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 40. There is little bureaucratic red tape when trying to do something new or different. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. Workspaces are designed to allow for easy and frequent communication with each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. There are few boundaries between departments/units that keep employees from working together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. Employees are available (i.e., not out of the office or otherwise too busy) to participate in meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Rewards and Recognition Systems and Practices

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 44. Employees are recognized or rewarded for learning new knowledge and skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. Employees are recognized or rewarded for helping solve business/organizational problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. The current reward or appraisal system recognizes, in some way, team learning and performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47. Employees are recognized or rewarded for helping each other learn. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. Employees are recognized or rewarded for experimenting with new ideas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Relationship of Work to Organizational Goals

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 49. Employees understand how their work relates to the goals or mission of the organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 50. Employees' performance goals are clearly aligned with the organization's strategic goals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. Employees meet work deadlines. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	

Communication of Information

Availability

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 52. Information is gathered from clients, customers, suppliers or other stakeholders to gauge how well we're doing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53. Currently available information tells us what we need to know about the effectiveness of our programs, processes, products, and services. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 54. There are adequate records of past change efforts and what happened as a result. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Dissemination

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 55. There are existing systems to manage and disseminate information for those who need and can use it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 56. Employees are cross-trained to perform various job functions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57. Employees have access to the information they need to make decisions regarding their work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 58. Employees use technologies to communicate with one another. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 59. When new information that would be helpful to others is learned or discovered, it gets disseminated to those individuals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Teams

60. My department/unit currently operates via (or is transitioning towards) a team-based structure.

- ☐ Yes, this is true.
☐ No, this is not true.

61. Employees are provided training on how to work as a team member.

- ☐ Yes, this is true.
☐ No, this is not true.

62. My work is sometimes conducted as part of a working group that is or could be identified as a "team."

- ☐ Yes, this is true. (Continue with item 63)
☐ No, this is not true. (Go to item 71)

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	
Respond to items 63-70 based on your experiences as a team member.						
63. When conflict arises among team members, it is resolved effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	
64. Team members are open and honest with one another.	1	2	3	4	5	
65. Team meetings are well facilitated.	1	2	3	4	5	
66. Team meetings address both team processes and work content.	1	2	3	4	5	
67. Team meetings strive to include everyone's opinion.	1	2	3	4	5	
68. Teams are encouraged to learn from each other and to share their learning with others.	1	2	3	4	5	
69. Teams accomplish work they are charged to do.	1	2	3	4	5	
70. Teams are an effective way to meet an organization's goals.	1	2	3	4	5	

Evaluation

Please use the following definition of *evaluation* when responding to the items below:

Evaluation is a process of systematic inquiry to provide information for decision-making about some object – a program, project, process, organization, system, or product. Use of the evaluation results might lead to making refinements to the program or to offering new services or products.

71. The integration of evaluation activities into our work has enhanced (or would enhance) the quality of decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5	
72. It has been (or would be) worthwhile to integrate evaluation activities into our daily work practices.	1	2	3	4	5	
73. Managers and supervisors like (or would like) us to evaluate our efforts.	1	2	3	4	5	
74. Evaluation helps (or would help) us provide better programs, processes, products and services.	1	2	3	4	5	
75. There would be support among employees if we tried to do more (or any) evaluation work.	1	2	3	4	5	
76. Doing (more) evaluation would make it easier to convince managers of needed changes.	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	
77. This would be a good time to begin (or renew or intensify) efforts to conduct evaluations.	1	2	3	4	5	
78. There are evaluation processes in place that enable employees to review how well changes we make are working.	1	2	3	4	5	

Additional Information

79. Which of the following best describes your job category? (Check one.)

- ☐ First-Line Supervisor
- ☐ Middle Manager
- ☐ Senior Manager
- ☐ Administrative
- ☐ Production
- ☐ Sales
- ☐ Non-Managerial Professional
- ☐ Technical
- ☐ Customer Service
- ☐ Other _____

80. Which of the following best describes your organization? (Check one.)

- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Business Services
- ☐ Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- ☐ Health Services
- ☐ Wholesale/Retail Trade
- ☐ Finance/Insurance/Banking
- ☐ Education Services
- ☐ Government (Local, State, Federal)
- ☐ Non-Profit
- ☐ Other _____

81. How long have you worked for this organization? (Check one.)

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6 months – 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

Analyzing and Interpreting the Survey's Results

Each participant's responses should be entered in a database (e.g., Excel, SPSS). Mean scores can then be calculated for each dimension and subcategory. The results of this analysis can be displayed on the worksheet below.

Culture	Leadership	Systems & Structures	Communication	Teams (if answered "yes," to items 60-62) If answered "no", skip this column)	Evaluation
<i>Collaboration & Problem Solving</i>	28.	<i>Open & Accessible Work Environment</i>	<i>Availability</i>	63.	71.
1.	29.	40.	52.	64.	72.
2.	30.	41.	53.	65.	73.
3.	31.	42.	54.	66.	74.
4.	32.	43.	Subtotal Mean	67.	75.
5.	33.	Subtotal Mean		68.	76.
6.	34.	<i>Rewards & Recog. Systems & Practices</i>		69.	77.
7.	35.	44.	<i>Dissemination</i>	70.	78.
8.	36.	45.	55.		
9.	37.	46.	56.		
10.	38.	47.	57.		
11.	39.	48.	58.		
12.		Subtotal Mean	59.		
Subtotal Mean		<i>Relationship of Work to Org. Goals</i>	Subtotal Mean		
<i>Risk Taking</i>		49.			
13.		50.			
14.		51.			
15.		Subtotal Mean			
16.					
17.					
Subtotal Mean					
<i>Participatory Decision Making</i>					
18.					
19.					
20.					
21.					
22.					
23.					
24.					
25.					
26.					
27.					
Subtotal Mean					
Total Mean Score	Total Mean Score	Total Mean Score	Total Mean Score	Total Mean Score	Total Mean Score

Interpretation of Results

If a department or organization were to score low (e.g., below 3.0) in one or more of the dimensions, this would indicate that learning from evaluation might not be supported or allowed to succeed. Likewise, it would indicate that the department or organization isn't prepared to engage in other kinds of organizational learning practices. These kinds of results can help the organization determine where to focus its improvement efforts if its goal is to become a learning organization.

Example

An educational nonprofit organization asked each of its 50 employees to complete the ROLE survey. The mean scores for each dimension were then calculated across the 50 respondents; these are shown in the table below. In interpreting the results, the department's management might conclude that its *leadership*, *culture*, and *systems of communication* are doing pretty well – at least in terms of supporting organizational learning principles (mean scores at or above 3.5). On the other hand, the unit's *systems and structures*, its use of *teams*, and use and/or support of *evaluation* are less likely to facilitate organizational learning. Based on these results, the organization decides to devote further effort to examining the results of the subcategories in the *systems and structures* dimension (open and accessible work environment, rewards and recognition systems and practices, and relationship of work to organizational goals). At the same time they begin looking at ways in which teamwork and evaluation efforts can further support the organization's goals.

Mean Scores of 3.5 or Higher	Mean Scores Below 3.5
Leadership (3.55) Communication (3.90) Culture (3.50)	Systems and Structures (2.60) Teams (3.45) Evaluation (2.95)