

## CCAT Interpretation Guide

The Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT), is a 146-question, online tool that measures an organization’s effectiveness through an analysis of its four core capacities—adaptive, leadership, management, and technical—as well as organizational culture. At the end of this analysis, an organization will receive findings about its core and sub-capacity scores, life cycle stage placement, and prioritized and detailed capacity-building plans that serve as a guide to improve effectiveness. Please refer to [www.tcccat.com](http://www.tcccat.com) for more details on the core capacities and life cycle continuum.

This CCAT Interpretation Guide will assist you in interpreting your organization’s CCAT results report. By following the steps outlined below, your organization should better understand its strengths and challenges. You will also be better able to devise a plan for strengthening critical areas of improvement. This document includes answers to commonly asked CCAT interpretation questions, as well as information on how to access customer service.

Before reviewing this document, please keep in mind that the CCAT is a leadership and organizational learning tool; it should not be viewed as an organization’s “report card.” The CCAT provides a comprehensive framework for facilitating discussion and brainstorming about organizational effectiveness. There are many forces at play in determining an organization’s effectiveness, including the external environment. Being aware of the external factors is important, but the CCAT results focus on the internal factors that you can control, the core capacities.

### **Interpreting your CCAT results report:**

To most effectively interpret your CCAT results report, we recommend going through the following four-step process:

- STEP 1:** Review the introductory pages of the report
- STEP 2:** Locate your organization’s lifecycle placement
- STEP 3:** Examine the priority recommendations
- STEP 4:** Determine your organizational strengths as listed by sub-capacity scores

#### **STEP 1: Review introductory material**

Pages three through nine of the CCAT results report contain important information on the core and sub-capacities that comprise the tool, as well as the theoretical model upon which the CCAT is based. We recommend reviewing this information before any other sections of the report.

#### **STEP 2: Locate your organizational lifecycle placement**

Find the organizational lifecycle placement on page 10 of your CCAT report. Your organization’s lifecycle stage is the lens through which you should interpret the rest of the results report. It affects the way in which capacity should be developed and assessed. “Where you are” is indicated by the red diamond – both on the curve of the chart and in the bars below the graph. The horizontal white bars tell you how well you are doing in each of the three stages. Please keep in mind that this is an additive model, and your focus is determined by the lowest level regardless of how well you are doing in other areas. Descriptions of each lifecycle stage can be found on the second to last page of the results report.

Please note that the CCAT determines your organization’s lifecycle stage at one point in time and does not correlate to the age or size of an organization. An organization may move through the lifecycle

numerous times in its development. For example, although an “established” organization might have a large operating budget, it may have lost touch with Core Program Development. Labeling this organization as mature would overlook the established nonprofit’s need to increase its organizational effectiveness.

### **STEP 3: Priority recommendations**

Next, review the Prioritized Capacity-Building plan on page 11 of the CCAT results report. These recommendations highlight the top priorities for improving your organization’s effectiveness. The computer-generated plan is based on your organization’s lifecycle stage and its scores in the four core capacities and organizational culture. The report presents these recommendations in order of importance in relation to what the research reports as “critical” to advancing along the development continuum. Some capacities are more important to the successful advancement of a lifecycle, while others are less so. If an organization needs improvement in the “critical” capacities, the recommendations and capacity-building strategies associated with these weaker capacities will be listed first. The plan does not necessarily list only your weakest overall areas.

Again, you should review this information through the lens of your lifecycle stage. The number of recommendations provided depends on your organizational needs to move to the next level. These recommendations should not be your organization’s only focus, but they are the key things to address. Like most of the CCAT report, the recommendations should be used as a starting point for discussion and planning. When reviewing this section of the report, your organizational leaders should, as a group, ask each other:

- Can the recommendations be grouped?
- Are there recommendations that don’t make sense for the organization?
- What item in the capacity-building plan really excites you, and why?
- What item in the capacity-building plan concerns you, and why?

On the pages following the core and sub-capacity scores, each recommendation from the prioritized list will be reiterated with details on strategies for accomplishing it. There are some strategies that can be implemented internally, and others where you would need external assistance.

### **STEP 4: Organizational Strengths/Challenges**

Finally, review your organization’s core and sub-capacity scores. Based on the survey respondents’ answers, the CCAT generates organizational scores for each core and sub-capacity. Scores are based on a 300-point scale:

- 230 and greater .....Strong
- 190 – 229 .....Satisfactory
- Less than 190 .....Challenging

A score lower than 190 is seen as an area that needs to be strengthened. If your organization scores below 190, it does not mean that your organization is in distress. However, it does mean that working on strengthening those capacities is crucial for your organization’s growth and/or improvement. A list with explanations of all of the capacities is contained in the introductory pages of the report.

The four core capacities give us a holistic model of organizational effectiveness. The capacities work together as a team: a deficiency in any one of these will be a detriment to the others; by the same token, a strength in any one of these can facilitate changes in the others. Additionally, the organizational

culture—the history, structure, beliefs, and values individuals hold as a group in their organization— affects and is affected by all of these capacities. Please note that while all four capacities are necessary for any organization, the leadership and adaptive capacities are the most critical – that is, leadership and adaptability are the two capacities that separate effective organizations from those which are less so. Each of these four capacity areas works together, both as separate and interconnecting areas, to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization.

### **Common questions during the interpretation process:**

#### **Does skipping questions bring an organization's score down?**

No. Results are calculated based on answered questions only. Your organization is not penalized for unanswered questions. This ensures that if a question is answered, it has been answered by members of an organization who felt they could speak to that issue.

#### **If some of my sub-capacity scores are really low, why don't they appear on my prioritized list?**

We recommend that you not look at raw scores first. You should look at them through the lifecycle placement and priority list lens. If they do not appear on your list, then these areas may not be critical for lifecycle advancement. It is important to think about lifecycle when assessing organizational capacity because leadership and adaptive capacity can drive advancement. Management and technical capacity building must follow so that the organization's systems and skills keep up with the program demands.

#### **What if I disagree with results?**

Scores are aggregated based on the senior leaders' responses to the CCAT assessment. As a group, we recommend that you ask senior leaders if the results are aligned with their opinions.

#### **How do I process all of this information?**

We recommend that you interpret your CCAT report following the four-step process explained above. By asking big questions as a group, you can determine the best next steps for your organization. Broad questions like, "What can we learn from this?" are most effective. Allow for challenges and questions during this group process.

### **Additional Assistance**

Please refer to the online resources at [www.tcccat.com](http://www.tcccat.com) if you have further questions on the CCAT, or getting started with the assessment. If you require additional assistance, or if you are experiencing technical difficulties, please contact our CCAT Help Desk at: [CCATHelp@tccgrp.com](mailto:CCATHelp@tccgrp.com) or 866- 470-2258.