

CJCC Essential Elements Assessment Tool

What is the CJCC essential elements assessment tool?

The CJCC essential elements assessment tool is a comprehensive list of all the essential elements and corresponding key factors. It serves as a useful framework for comparing an existing council with the national standards of CJCCs. By using the tool, a CJCC can discern whether it aligns with characteristics of high-performing councils.

The CJCC essential elements assessment tool is intended to help a council identify potential areas for improvement. However, it may not be feasible for a CJCC to fully comport with every aspect of the national standards. For example, a CJCC may be required to follow state laws that differ from the national standards, or a jurisdiction may not have the resources to implement one or more key factors. In such cases, it is essential for the CJCC to apply the national standards and assessment findings as best as possible, taking into account the unique circumstances of its jurisdiction. The tool is intended to help the council achieve the highest level of performance, recognizing that each CJCC's path to success may be different.

How do you use the CJCC essential elements assessment tool?

The essential elements tool enables a quick and straightforward face-value assessment of the CJCC when conducted by an individual familiar with the CJCC. For example, an experienced CJCC director or chairperson could use this tool to gauge the council's compliance with national standards based on its engagement with the council. However, a more in-depth analysis is advisable, which can be achieved by combining the essential elements tool with a comprehensive information-gathering process. This thorough analysis may encompass one-on-one interviews with CJCC members and system stakeholders; a web-based survey targeting both members and stakeholders; an extensive review of vision and mission statements, bylaws, strategic plans, annual reports, meeting documentation, and the council's website; and direct observation of CJCC meetings, including the executive committee, standing committees, and workgroups. In situations where the CJCC is facing challenges, engaging an external expert to conduct the assessment using the essential elements tool may prove advantageous. An external expert can offer objectivity and technical assistance to enhance the council's performance.

To use the essential elements tool, the individual (i.e., the assessor) conducting the assessment shall determine whether the CJCC complies with the key factors listed under each essential element. The assessor shall then assign an overall rating for each of the ten essential elements based on the level of compliance. The rating criteria for the key factors and essential element are as follows:

1. **Fully compliant** – The CJCC fully comports with the key factor/essential element.
2. **Mostly compliant** – The CJCC comports with a majority of the key factor/essential element; the council deviates from the key factor/essential element, but aspects of the key factor are mostly present.
3. **Somewhat compliant** – The CJCC comports with a minority of the key factor/essential element; aspects of the key factor/essential element are somewhat present.
4. **Not compliant** – The CJCC does not comport with the key factor/essential element.

When evaluating the CJCC using essential elements assessment tool, the assessor should avoid assigning a rating based on binary thinking (“yes” or “no”) as it may oversimplify the intent of the assessment. For example, for the key factor “the CJCC has bylaws that outline the systemic purpose and structure of the council,” the assessor should not rate the factor as “fully compliant” simply because the council has written bylaws present. The assessor should review the bylaws to ensure that the bylaws meet all the criteria specified in the national standards to be fully compliant. If, for instance, the council’s bylaws do not define the roles and responsibilities of the CJCC officers or staff, then the CJCC is not “fully compliant” on the key factor (i.e., bylaws) but rather “mostly compliant” or “somewhat compliant” based on the overall level of compliance.

The assessor shall always refer to the national standards for CJCCs when using the CJCC essential elements tool. Referencing the standards is particularly important when assigning an overall rating to the essential element, as the national standards provide useful contextual information in the commentary.

Once the assessment is completed, the results will reveal the strengths of the CJCC and potential opportunities for improvement. For example, if the assessment reveals that the CJCC is only somewhat compliant with the “participation” essential element, then the CJCC shall refer to the key factors where the CJCC was not fully compliant and develop a plan to bolster the council’s performance in those areas. Again, the national standards for CJCC should be consulted for guidance on making improvements. NIC also offers additional useful resources for CJCCs at <https://nicic.gov/projects/criminal-justice-coordinating-committees> and on the CJCC microsite at <https://info.nicic.gov/cjcc/>.

The findings of the essential elements assessment tool should be shared with the CJCC officers and members to generate discussion on strengthening the council. In some situations, it may be beneficial to form a workgroup to develop a plan for bringing a CJCC into compliance with the national standards and then having the workgroup share their proposed plan to the council for their approval.

CJCC Essential Elements Tool				
Essential Elements and Key Factors	Fully Compliant	Mostly Compliant	Somewhat Compliant	Not Compliant
Systemic Focus – <i>The CJCC takes a systemic approach to coordinating the criminal justice system and is guided by a vision and a mission statement.</i>				
	X			
		X		
	X			
	X			
1	X			
2		X		
Overall Ranking for System Focused	X			
Participation – <i>The CJCC has executive-level decision-makers as members, and they actively participate in the council.</i>				
	X			
	X			
	X			
2		X		
	X			
3			X	
	X			
Overall Ranking for Participation	X			

Essential Elements and Key Factors (continued)		Fully Compliant	Mostly Compliant	Somewhat Compliant	Not Compliant
Leadership – <i>The CJCC has an effective leadership structure that includes officers and an executive committee.</i>					
	The CJCC has designated officers from different disciplines.	X			
	The CJCC has a fair and transparent process in place to select officers; officers serve set terms.	X			
	Officers keep the activities and initiatives of the CJCC and the executive committee on track.	X			
	CJCC officers and the executive committee work in consultation with CJCC staff to prepare for CJCC meetings and advance CJCC initiatives.	X			
2	CJCC bylaws clearly outline appropriate duties and responsibilities of the officers and executive committee.				X
4	The executive committee includes CJCC officers and a small fraction of the CJCC membership.				X
Overall Ranking for Leadership			X		
Consensus Building – <i>The CJCC makes consensus-based decisions and relies on voting for procedural matters.</i>					
	The CJCC is advisory in nature and relies on consensus for decision-making.	X			
	The CJCC discusses matters productively and professionally to find common ground and possible solutions.	X			
	CJCC voting is used primarily for procedural matters and when it is required by the CJCC’s bylaws or legislative mandate (if applicable).	X			
2	CJCC bylaws outline the council’s voting procedures.	X			
	The CJCC includes the perspective of underrepresented communities when making decisions.		X		
	The CJCC has a conflict-of-interest policy.				X
Overall Ranking for Consensus Building			X		

Essential Elements and Key Factors (continued)		Fully Compliant	Mostly Compliant	Somewhat Compliant	Not Compliant
Organized Meetings – The CJCC, including committees and workgroups, has structured meetings regularly.					
	CJCC meetings are productive and well organized.	X			
	The CJCC meets monthly or bimonthly and has a set meeting time and date throughout the year.	X			
	The CJCC provides agendas at least three working days before a meeting and 24 hours before an emergency meeting.	X			
	CJCC meetings are open to the public and allow time for public comment on the agenda.	X			
	Requirements for a quorum are stipulated in the bylaws.	X			
	The CJCC produces meeting documentation and posts it on the council’s website.	X			
	The CJCC follows open meeting laws.	X			
	Overall Ranking for Organized Meetings	X			
Committees and Workgroups – The CJCC has standing committees and workgroups that advance the strategic initiatives and work of the council.					
	The CJCC uses committees and workgroups to advance the work of the council.	X			
5	The committees and workgroups have chairpersons appointed by the CJCC.	X			
	The committees and workgroups include CJCC members and nonmembers with subject matter expertise, include community members.	X			
	Committees and workgroups routinely update the CJCC and the executive committee on their progress.	X			
6	CJCC staff support the committees and workgroups.		X		
	Committees and workgroups produce meeting documentation that is made available to the public.	X			
	Overall Ranking for Committees & Workgroups		X		

Essential Elements and Key Factors (continued)		Fully Compliant	Mostly Compliant	Somewhat Compliant	Not Compliant
Strategic Planning – <i>The CJCC has a strategic plan that guides the work of the council and produces desired outcomes.</i>					
	The CJCC creates and adopts a data-informed strategic plan every three to five years.			X	
	The strategic plan is produced collaboratively by CJCC members and community.				X
	The strategic plan is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.			X	
7	The strategic plan includes short-, medium-, and long-term initiatives.		X		
8	The strategic plan and related deliverables are reviewed annually and updated as needed by CJCC.			X	
8	The strategic plan is shared with the public, and progress reports are provided at least annually.			X	
Overall Ranking for Strategic Planning					X
Data and Research – <i>The CJCC produces quantitative and qualitative data on the criminal justice system and uses the data to inform decision-making.</i>					
	The CJCC uses data and research to inform decision-making and pursue evidence-based solutions.	X			
	The CJCC collects and analyzes local data to monitor trends and proactively manage the criminal justice system.	X			
	The CJCC members and their agencies share pertinent system data with the council.	X			
	The CJCC tracks specific data metrics to determine progress toward strategic goals and objectives.	X			
	The CJCC produces an annual systems data report that informs the council and community.	X			
	The CJCC engages independent outside partners to assist with research efforts.	X			
Overall Ranking for Data and Research		X			

Essential Elements and Key Factors <i>(continued)</i>		Fully Compliant	Mostly Compliant	Somewhat Compliant	Not Compliant
Community Engagement – <i>The CJCC engages the community by sharing information and by involving the community in the work of the council.</i>					
9	The CJCC purposefully engages the community and includes the community in decision-making.			X	
	The CJCC proactively educates and informs the community about the work of the council, including progress and challenges.		X		
9	The CJCC has created a communications plan for conveying information to the public and the media.		X		
	The CJCC uses knowledgeable and experienced spokespersons from the council for community outreach efforts.	X			
	The CJCC maintains a website to provide information about, and resources related to, the council and the criminal justice system.	X			
Overall Ranking for Community Engagement			X		
Director and Staff – <i>The CJCC has a director and support staff who coordinate the council and advance the council’s strategies and initiatives.</i>					
	The CJCC has a dedicated director who is accountable to the council’s executive committee.	X			
	The CJCC director role is a professional, executive-level position in the organization.	X			
6	The CJCC director has staff appropriate to support the CJCC’s operations.			X	
	The CJCC director and staff have job descriptions that clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of the positions.		X		
10	The CJCC director and staff have performance reviews commensurate with their job duties; the executive committee contributes to the performance of the director.			X	
Overall Ranking for Director and Staff			X		

Coordinator acting as director of CJC; until Director OJRE is hired

Overall rankings for each essential element from the CJCC essential elements assessment tool should be entered into the table below for a synopsis of the assessment results. The summary should reveal the strengths of the CJCC as well as opportunities to potentially improve the council. Ideally, the assessment findings will be shared with the CJCC and used to generate meaningful discussion on shaping a council that is vibrant and is successful in fulfilling its purpose.

As noted earlier, the CJCC should consult the national standards for CJCCs for guidance on strengthening a council’s performance, as well as NIC’s CJCC resource page at <https://nicic.gov/projects/criminal-justice-coordinating-committees> and on the CJCC microsite at <https://info.nicic.gov/cicc/>.

CJCC Essential Elements Assessment Summary				
Essential Elements	Fully Compliant	Mostly Compliant	Somewhat Compliant	Not Compliant
Overall Ranking for Systemic Focus		X		
Overall Ranking for Participation	X			
Overall Ranking for Leadership	X			
Overall Ranking for Consensus Building	X			
Overall Ranking for Organized Meetings	X			
Overall Ranking for Committees & Workgroups	X			
Overall Ranking for Strategic Planning				X
Overall Ranking for Data and Research	X			
Overall Ranking for Director and Staff		X		

Appendix

1. The vision of the CJC is associated with the new Office of Justice Reform & Equity.
2. The county ordinance creating and amending the CJC.
3. The formalized onboarding process began in 2023.
4. The CJC executive committee has a large membership, even greater than some of the subcommittees.
5. There is no appointment process; rather, chairs are determined by vote within the subcommittees.
6. Many of the staff supporting the CJC and its subcommittees are “loaned” from other departments.
7. The strategic plan is mostly compliant but needs to be updated.
8. Year in Review.
9. This is an emerging area for the CJC.
10. The CJC coordinator is being considered the CJCC director in this question. The CJCC director and staff do have performance reviews commensurate with their job duties. While the executive committee does not formally contribute to evaluating the performance of the director, the CJC coordinator does hold one-on-one meetings with all voting and advisory members of the executive CJCC annually.