



International Team Excellence Award (ITEA) Criteria

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Welcome!

ASQ is pleased that you have chosen to use the International Team Excellence Award Process as part of your quality improvement journey.

Please note: This version of the criteria is **completely rewritten** and effective starting with the preliminary round of the 2013-14 ITEA Process. Previous versions of the ITEA Criteria and associated documents (e.g., scoresheet, scoring guidelines, glossary, etc.) are not compatible and should not be used.

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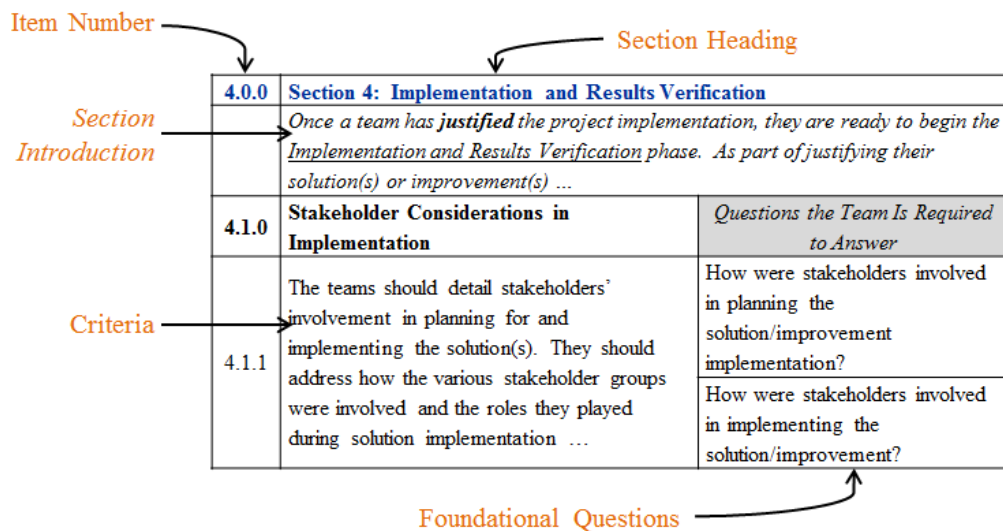
0.0.0 Overview

ASQ envisions a global community that uses quality technology, concepts, and tools to improve themselves and their world. Within that context, the ITEA Criteria provide a framework to enable teams to efficiently contribute to overall improvement efforts. The criteria recognize five foundational project phases that are key to team-based improvements:

1. Project and Team Selection
2. Current Situation and Root Cause/Improvement Opportunity Analysis
3. Solution/Improvement Development
4. Implementation and Results Verification
5. Preservation and Stakeholder Communication

(Note: The criteria has a sixth section that deals exclusively with communicating project progress and results.)

Each criteria section consists of the following parts:



Italicized text throughout the criteria contains clarifying information. Teams will only be judged by how they respond to the foundational questions.

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1.0.0	Section 1: Project and Team Selection	
	<p><i>The Project and Team Selection phase recognizes the fundamental importance of identifying projects that can provide a significant benefit to the company and then enabling those projects to succeed through effective preparation and staffing of a project team. Teams assigned to a project must understand the “why” of the project: who felt the project was important, what is the context or environment within an organization that made the project important, and what specific gaps or opportunities the organization needs to have addressed. The team members must be selected from those who have both a “stake” in the outcome of the project and the ability to help the project succeed. If required, the organization must be willing to add other team members with needed skills or knowledge and then prepare the entire group to function as a team.</i></p>	
1.1.0	Understanding the Context for Project Selection	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
1.1.1	<p>Projects are usually identified and selected before a team is formed. This is because, in most organizations, those associates responsible for selecting projects are generally different from those who actually execute the project. Understanding who the project “sponsors” are will help the team know how best to approach the project.</p>	<p>Who was responsible for selecting the project?</p> <p>What background information on the company or those who selected the project is needed to better understand the context of the project?</p>
1.2.0	Project Selection Process	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
1.2.1	<p>Projects are a response to a need for some type of change. In the most general terms, projects result from perceived gaps or opportunities that need to be addressed. These will either be (1) gaps associated with one or more specific processes, or (2) will be opportunities associated with either an existing process or a process that the project team will need to create. In constructing the story of their project, this is the point at which a team needs to specify whether they are a problem-solving team that is addressing a gap by identifying and eliminating root causes or a process-improvement team that is improving an existing process or creating a new one. <i>NOTE: Throughout the rest of the criteria, there will be references to root causes and improvement opportunities. In responding to criteria items, the team should strive to be internally consistent as to whether they are a problem-solving or a process-improvement team.</i></p>	<p>How was the gap or opportunity brought to the attention of the project identification group?</p> <p>Answer only ONE of these: What is the gap (problem solving)? What is the opportunity (process improvement)?</p> <p>What area of the organization had the gap or opportunity?</p>
1.2.2	<p>Most organizations have more gaps and opportunities than they have the resources to address them. In order to help with project selection, the potential impact of the gaps or opportunities must at least be estimated. Those selecting the project should have an explainable approach—possibly including the use of tools—that will form the basis for their decision. The approach and any supporting data used for the estimate must be appropriate for the project and identified gap.</p>	<p>What data was generated to help select the project?</p> <p>What methods and/or tools were used to assess or prioritize the need?</p> <p>Why were these methods and/or tools used to select the project?</p>



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1.2.3	<p>In order to gain support, identified gaps need to be defined in business terms that relate to local or organization-level goals, performance measures, and/or strategies. The “gap” expresses the difference between where the organization is and where it wants to be.</p>	<p>What goals (organizational and/or local), performance measures, and/or strategies is the project expected to impact?</p>
		<p>How do the stated measures relate to the perceived gap or opportunity (1.2.1)?</p>
		<p>What is the problem statement that expresses where the organization wants to be at the end of the project?</p>
1.3.0	Team Selection and Preparation	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
1.3.1	<p>Once a project is identified, the next critical step is selecting appropriate resources for the project. Of primary concern is identifying stakeholder groups: those who are suppliers to and customers of the targeted portion of the organization, as well as those working in the targeted area.</p>	<p>How were the stakeholder groups identified?</p>
		<p>What or who are the stakeholder groups?</p>
1.3.2	<p>In the context of both the process area and the project needs, the team must be composed of a mixture of those with process knowledge and technical skills relevant to the project work. In addition to process stakeholders, it is important to determine if additional skill sets and/or resources are needed for the project to succeed.</p>	<p>What knowledge or skill sets were determined to be necessary for successful completion of the project?</p>
		<p>To what extent did the existing stakeholder groups have the required knowledge or skills?</p>
		<p>What additional knowledge and skills were brought in to make the project successful?</p>
1.3.3	<p>Even with bringing in skilled team members from outside the stakeholder group, it is sometimes beneficial to provide some or all team members with training before the project starts. This may be specific tool training to prepare the team to do its job. It might also be general project-skills training to help them operate more effectively as a team. If it was determined that no training was needed for these team members, then the team should take this opportunity to explain why this particular team needed no training.</p>	<p>Before the project started, what specific training was done?</p>
		<p>Before the project started, what was done to prepare the team to work together as a team?</p>
1.3.4	<p>In addition to training, it is also important for team members to have a clear understanding of what to expect during the project, so they can function well as a team. This should include general and skill-specific roles, meeting routines, how the team will communicate both among its members as well as out to the stakeholder group(s), and a clear understanding of how project performance will be tracked and measured as the team progresses through the project.</p>	<p>What roles and expectations were determined ahead of the project?</p>
		<p>What deadlines and deliverables did the team have to consider ahead of actually starting the project?</p>
		<p>Before the project started, what team routines, including communication, were established?</p>



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2.0.0	Section 2: Current Situation and Root Cause/Improvement Opportunity Analysis	
	<p><i>The <u>Current Situation and Root Cause/Improvement Opportunity Analysis</u> phase of the project requires that the team take personal ownership of the project goals and then clearly identify the obstacles that will need to be overcome (either root causes of a problem or requirements for an opportunity). “Ownership” implies that the team will understand current processes and be able to express the extent to which their specific project should be able to address the original gaps. The identification of obstacles involves both an initial broad review of possible root causes or opportunities and a final determination of the areas where project work will be concentrated.</i></p>	
2.1.0	Key Measures Expected of the Project	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
2.1.1	<p>Once in place, the team must take ownership of the project deliverables. One essential way to do that is to translate the overall project gaps into the team’s specific deliverables. From the perceived gaps or opportunities in Item 1.2.1, the team should identify the specific goals or measures for which they are responsible; in some cases this may only be a portion of the overall gap(s) identified. While doing this, the team should also identify additional potential benefits they feel may come from the project, but which are not direct project measures.</p>	<p>What specific goals and/or measures is the team trying to achieve with the project?</p> <p>What additional potential benefits, other than the specific goals and/or measures, will the project impact?</p>
2.2.0	Possible Root Causes/Improvement Opportunities	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
2.2.1	<p>There are usually many ways to close gaps or plan for new opportunities. Teams should explore multiple ways their current situation can be contributing to the gaps or can form a basis for new opportunities. Teams should have an explainable approach—including any tools used—to uncover those. Selecting an appropriate approach is crucial to bridging the gap and determining how to address that gap. In some organizations, a team may be provided a basic list of methods and tools to use. Even in that situation, the team should be able to present what information was needed and why the tools delivered that information.</p>	<p>What methods and/or tools were used to identify possible root causes/improvement opportunity(ies)?</p> <p>How was the team prepared to use the methods and/or tools?</p> <p>Why were these methods and/or tools selected?</p>
2.2.2	<p>Once the approach—including tools—is finalized, the team must use that approach in order to identify the possible root causes/improvement opportunities. Any approach or tool used must generate the data necessary for the team to be able to determine possible root causes/improvement opportunities.</p>	<p>What data was generated and how was the data analyzed to identify the possible root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies)?</p> <p>What were the possible root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies)?</p>



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2.3.0	Final Root Cause(s)/Improvement Opportunity(ies)	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
2.3.1	Having identified a variety of possible root causes/improvement opportunities, the team needs to narrow down the possibilities to identify the true root cause(s) or final improvement opportunity(ies) for the project. The methods and/or tools used to select the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies) may be different than the ones used to identify the possible root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies).	What methods and/or tools were used to identify the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies)?
		How was the team prepared to use the methods and/or tools?
		Why were these methods and/or tools selected?
2.3.2	Once the approach—including tools—is finalized, the team must use that approach in order to identify the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies). The team should explain how data was analyzed in order to select the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies).	What data was generated and how was the data analyzed in order to identify the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies)?
		What are specific examples of data analysis that lead to the final root cause?
		What was (were) the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies)?
2.3.3	Once the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies) is identified, the team should validate that these are the true root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies). This may entail using methods and/or tools and data to prove that the true root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies) were identified.	How was (were) the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies) validated?
		What evidence showed that the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies) were validated prior to solution development?
2.4.0	Project Management Update	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
2.4.1	Teams need to periodically reflect on their performance and adjust to changing information and circumstances. This includes looking at stakeholder involvement and communication, and how potential resistance identified during this phase was or will be addressed; potential or realized impact to the project's purpose, scope, or deliverables; whether additional training or adjustments to team membership are needed; and whether the project is on track to deliver the desired results. <i>Note: Even if no changes were necessary, there should be evidence to suggest the team considered the project scope, deliverables, team membership, and management routines before progressing further.</i>	How was the correctness of the initial project scope, deliverables, and timing verified (or, what changes were made)?
		How were stakeholders involved and/or communicated within the root cause/improvement opportunity phase of the project?
		What stakeholder resistance was identified and/or addressed in this phase of the project?
		How was the appropriateness of the initial team membership and management routines confirmed (or, what changes were made)?



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Section 3: Solution/Improvement Development		
3.0.0	Section 3: Solution/Improvement Development	
	<p><i>The <u>Solution/Improvement Development</u> phase of the project mirrors the prior phase in that the team should start out with a broad range of potential solutions or improvements and then come up with a final choice for implementation. While this may seem simple, this is the point at which changes (or new development) are being proposed and a series of questions need to be answered by the team: Was a logical and supportable approach used to identify both potential and final plans? Will the plans really address the project goals? Are the plans practical, i.e., will the organization accept them as reasonable and a “good value”?</i></p>	
3.1.0	Possible Solutions or Improvements	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
3.1.1	<p>Just as most gaps can have multiple root causes or improvement opportunities, there are usually multiple solutions that can address the final root cause(s) or process improvement(s) that the team just identified. Teams should explore these multiple solutions and improvement possibilities in order to arrive at what is best for their circumstances. Teams should have an explainable approach—including any tools used—to developing their solutions or improvements. Selecting an appropriate approach is crucial in being able to bridge from the root causes/improvement opportunities to the final solution(s). In some organizations, a team may be provided a basic list of methods and tools to use. Even in that situation, the team should be able to present what information was needed and why the tools delivered that information.</p>	What methods and/or tools were used to identify the possible solution(s)/improvement(s)?
		How was the team prepared to use the methods and/or tools?
		Why were these methods and/or tools selected?
3.1.2	<p>Once the approach—including tools—is finalized, the team must use that approach in order to identify the possible solutions or improvements. Any approach or tool used must generate the data necessary for the team to be able to determine the possible solutions or improvements resulting from the final root cause(s)/improvement opportunity(ies) (Item 2.3.2)</p>	What data was generated and how was the data analyzed to determine the possible solution(s)/improvement(s)?
		What are the possible solution(s)/improvement(s)?
		What evidence showed that the solution(s)/improvement(s) identified were possible instead of final?
3.2.0	Final Solutions or Improvements	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
3.2.1	<p>Having identified a variety of possible solutions or improvements, the team needs to narrow down the possibilities to identify the project’s proposed final solution(s) or improvement(s). The methods and/or tools used to select these final solution(s) or improvement(s) may be different than the ones used to identify the possible solutions or improvements.</p>	What methods and/or tools were used to identify the final solution(s)/improvement(s)?
		How was the team prepared to use the methods and/or tools?
		Why were these methods and/or tools selected?
3.2.2	<p>Once the approach—including tools—is finalized, the team must use that approach in order to identify the final solution(s) or improvement(s). The team should additionally present how data was analyzed in order to select the final solution(s) or improvement(s).</p>	How were the methods and/or tools used to determine the final solution(s)/improvement(s)?
		What is (are) the final solution(s)/improvement(s)?



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3.2.3	<p>Just because a team has proposed a solution does not mean that the solution is correct or will be accepted by the larger organization. Two separate and distinct checks have to take place before the solution can be implemented. These are validation and justification.</p> <p>The first of these, validation, is really part of identifying the proposed solution(s) or improvement(s). Here, the team needs to validate their proposed solution(s) or improvement(s), showing that they will help to close the original identified gap and meet the project's original goals.</p>	How were the final solution(s)/improvement(s) validated?
		What evidence showed that validation was performed prior to implementation?
3.2.4	<p>Besides addressing the original project goals, in order to support implementing their solution(s) or improvement(s), the team should review any additional benefits. These might have resulted from work already done, or might be tied to their specific proposed solution(s) or improvement(s).</p>	What additional potential benefits were anticipated from the final solution(s)/improvement(s)?
		Were the additional potential benefits anticipated prior to implementation?
3.2.5	<p>Once the team has validated their proposed solution(s) or improvement(s), and has gathered information on any additional project benefits, it is time for the second check: The team must justify their proposed solution(s) or improvement(s). Justification should be a data-based approach that shows that the proposed solution(s) or improvement(s) will clearly be worthwhile for the organization to implement. <i>NOTE: In order to do a proper justification, the team should have some basic implementation cost information. This is a necessary part of justification, but should not be confused with implementation planning.</i></p>	What data was generated and how was the data analyzed to justify why the chosen final solution(s)/improvement(s) should be implemented?
		What evidence showed that justification was performed prior to implementation?
3.3.0	Project Management Update	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
3.3.1	<p>Teams need to periodically reflect on their performance and adjust to changing information and circumstances. This includes looking at stakeholder involvement and communication, and how potential resistance identified during this phase was or will be addressed; potential or realized impact to the project's purpose, scope, or deliverables; whether additional training or adjustments to team membership are needed; and whether the project is on track to deliver the desired results.</p>	How was the correctness of the initial or updated project scope, deliverables, and timing confirmed (or, what changes were made)?
		How were stakeholders involved and/or communicated within the solution/improvement phase of the project?
		What stakeholder resistance was identified and/or addressed in this phase of the project?
		How was the appropriateness of the initial or updated team membership and management routines confirmed (or, what changes were made)?



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4.0.0	Section 4: Implementation and Results Verification	
	<p><i>Once a team has justified the project implementation, they are ready to begin the <u>Implementation and Results Verification</u> phase. As part of justifying their solution(s) or improvement(s), the team already has a basic understanding of what needs to be done to implement their solution. Broadly speaking, implementation needs to consider changes and impacts to personnel and to processes and infrastructure. Implementation planning is heavily dependent on the solution(s) or improvement(s) being implemented, but typically might include items like action plan development, allocation of resources, and time management activities. Finally, the team needs to present its results.</i></p>	
4.1.0	Stakeholder Considerations in Implementation	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
4.1.1	<p>The teams should detail stakeholders' involvement in planning for and implementing the solution(s). They should address how the various stakeholder groups were involved and the roles they played during solution implementation, or show how the interest of all stakeholder groups was taken into account.</p>	How were stakeholders involved in planning the solution/improvement implementation?
		How were stakeholders involved in implementing the solution/improvement?
4.1.2	<p>As was mentioned at the end of both Sections 2 and 3, stakeholder resistance can occur at any time during a project. However, during solution/improvement implementation—when old processes are changed or new processes are introduced—is the time when resistance to change is most apt to impact the project. The team should identify what steps were taken to anticipate the resistance (before it occurred), the various types of resistance that were actually encountered, and how the resistance that was encountered was identified.</p>	What was done to anticipate resistance before it occurred?
		What types of resistance were actually encountered during the course of solution/improvement implementation?
		How was the actual resistance identified?
4.1.3	<p>To minimize negative project impact, resistance should be addressed as soon as possible: Efforts should be made to keep anticipated or potential resistance from ever occurring and actual resistance should be dealt with as soon as it is identified. The team should detail how they addressed resistance encountered, including any reported in the project management updates for Sections 2 and 3.</p>	How was the actual resistance addressed?
		How did the team know it was successful in addressing the resistance?
4.1.4	<p>Resistance can be active (as discussed in the last couple of items) or it can be passive. There are many types of passive resistance, but one of the most pervasive is a simple lack of stakeholder buy-in or support of the changes needed for project implementation. As with everything else, teams should present an approach—including any tools used—to ensure stakeholder buy-in. Selecting an appropriate approach that ensures stakeholder support is crucial for smooth project implementation. Just as the team validated it had properly identified the root causes of and solutions/improvements for their project before proceeding, they should also be able to demonstrate that they had stakeholder buy-in prior to implementation. If it was not practical to obtain buy-in from all stakeholder groups, then the team should provide rationale for the limited approach it used or show how the interest of all stakeholder groups was taken into account.</p>	What was the evidence of stakeholder group buy-in?
		What evidence showed that buy-in was obtained prior to implementation?



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4.2.0	Solution/Improvement Implementation	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
4.2.1	Whether implementing a new process or changing an existing one, the team should explain what procedures or systems were created or changed to implement the solution. While planning needs to include <i>how</i> to sustain improvements, the team will be asked to address this in Section 5.	What process(es) or system(s) were changed or created to implement the solution/improvement?
		What systems were changed or created to measure and manage the performance of the implementation?
4.3.0	Project Results	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
4.3.1	With the new or changed processes firmly established, the team should be able to measure and verify their final project results. Going back to the beginning of Section 2, the team should report on its project success based on the team's specific goals or measures for which they are responsible. The team had the opportunity at the end of each section to indicate if there were any basic changes to their project. If any of those changes were goal changes, those adjustments should be incorporated.	What were the results?
		How did the results compare to the specific project goals/measures from Item 2.1.1?
4.3.2	While reporting on project results against original goals, the team should also identify additional benefits they achieved that were not direct project goals. If the improvements were to "soft" areas that are not easily measured (examples might be customer satisfaction or employee morale), then the team needs to relate how they determined there was an improvement in those areas.	What additional benefits were realized from the project?
		How did the team measure any of the additional benefits that were "soft"?
		How do the actual additional benefits that were realized compare to the expected additional benefits identified in Item 3.2.4?

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5.0.0 Section 5: Preservation and Stakeholder Communication		
<p><i>Preservation and Stakeholder Communication is a natural extension of the <u>Implementation and Results Verification</u> phase of the project. The focus in this phase is to ensure that all the resources expended in completing the project are not ultimately wasted, and also to ensure that all those involved in the project are aware of the ultimate success of the project. The sustaining efforts are split between ensuring that any changes do not disappear and ensuring that the benefits of changes made are also not lost.</i></p>		
5.1.0	Sustaining Results Over Time	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
5.1.1	<p>The initial benefits achieved from new or changed processes can gradually disappear over time. Broadly speaking, this happens in one of two ways. (1) The changes themselves will disappear and the process will return to its pre-project state. (2) The changes will remain in effect, but the benefit of those changes will gradually fade. To prevent the first of these, the team should explain what was done to sustain the solution(s) or improvement(s) over time.</p>	<p>What was done to make sure the process or system changes made during the implementation (Item 4.2.1) continued to be followed?</p>
		<p>What evidence showed that this became part of the organization’s culture/operating strategy?</p>
5.1.2	<p>While it is important that the team keep the changes from disappearing, it is ultimately more important that the project benefits not be lost. Part of the team’s implementation plan should provide for establishing management routines—including process changes or measurement systems—that will ensure that both the changes and the benefits of those changes will continue. If an existing system was used, then the team should explain why they knew that system would be effective in the new circumstances.</p>	<p>What was done to make sure the benefits obtained from the implementation (Item 4.2.1) were maintained?</p>
		<p>What evidence showed that this became part of the organization’s culture/operating strategy?</p>
5.2.0	Communication of Results	<i>Questions the Team Is Required to Answer</i>
5.2.1	<p>In the project management items (2.4.1 and 3.3.1), the team had the opportunity to share if and how they communicated information and any interim results to stakeholders and other interested people. At this point, the project is mostly complete and the results have been verified. Those results need to be formally shared with those who assigned the project to the team and with all interested internal and external stakeholder groups. The team is not expected to share proprietary information with external stakeholders, but they should ensure that proper communication occurs with all stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>How did the team communicate the results to the various stakeholder groups?</p>

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6.0.0 Section 6: Overall Presentation		
	<i>Overall Presentation is not a project phase, but rather a collection of key points for the team to consider in telling its story. While consisting of 10 separate items, there are three themes: (1) clarity of the visual presentation, (2) integration of visual and oral presentation, and (3) clarity of the oral presentation.</i>	
6.1.0	Overall Presentation	
	<i>Questions the Judges Will Answer About the Presentation</i>	
6.1.1	<p>Regardless of how well a team may have done in completing its project, the team’s final ITEA score will depend solely on how well its work is communicated. Consequently, points will be awarded to the team to cover the actual written and oral presentation. To obtain the highest possible score, the visual presentation must be easy to read and should track to the criteria items; attention should be drawn to key points and the visual presentation should support what is spoken. The spoken presentation also needs to support the visual and should be clear and easy to follow. Regardless of country of origin, all ITEA preliminary- and final-round judges must be fluent in English and all team presentations must be made in English (or with an English translator).</p>	Did the team include readable slide numbers throughout the presentation?
		Were the criteria item labels included throughout the slides?
		Did the criteria item labels match the respective content on the corresponding slide?
		Were the slide contents clear and easy to read (such as font size, tables, and graphs) when necessary (as opposed to being for illustration purposes)?
		Were graphics and illustrations used adequately and effectively to support the project and criteria?
		Was the presentation organized such that the team’s story of the project was readily followed?
		Did the written narrative of the presentation MATCH the spoken narrative of the presentation?
		Did the team use the available presentation time effectively?
		Was the overall pace of the presentation acceptable?
		Was the spoken presentation articulated clearly in English at an appropriate volume?

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