

An assessment may be conducted by expert facilitators or by the participants themselves. There are many possibilities for organizing an assessment, collecting and analyzing data, and making decisions based on the assessment. (These are all presented in *Sharing Justice Information: A Capability Assessment Toolkit*). However, regardless of the choices made about format, venue, or tools, these four critical success factors strongly influence results.

Trust and Candor

The success of the assessment depends in large part on the willingness of participants to make assessments and decisions based on solid evidence. Participants must be willing to freely share information about their own organizations and about the capabilities of their sharing partners. Such a willingness helps build an accurate assessment of the initiative as a whole. It also helps identify gaps in capability and strategies for addressing them.

Individual and Organizational Commitment

Capability assessment requires a high level of commitment from all participants and organizations to carry out a labor- and time-intensive endeavor. Considerable effort and time are needed to gather the necessary information, make capability judgments, participate in group discussions, resolve differences, reach decisions, and develop action plans. The endeavor also requires logistical support from participating organizations.

The Right Mix of Participants

Assessing information sharing capability requires specific knowledge and experience. The selection of participants should result in teams with the right mix of knowledge for the situation at hand. It is not necessary (or possible) for every participant to be an expert on every aspect or dimension of capability. What matters is to get the needed expertise by putting together the right team. This team should include program specialists, IT specialists, and program and agency leaders from each participating organization. Collectively, the participants must have knowledge of the program environment, existing systems, and possible future strategies and technologies.

Willingness to Repeat the Assessment As Needed

The complexity of information sharing initiatives and the changing nature of information needs and technologies suggest that assessments should be repeated over the life of an initiative. Through repeated assessments, emerging requirements can be taken into consideration and new capabilities and problems can be identified. Likewise, action plans can be refined in light of new requirements and resources that are identified through repeated assessments.

For more details and information about implementing capability assessments, see:

Sharing Justice Information: A Capability Assessment Toolkit (written guide)

http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/guides/sharing_justice_info

Sharing Justice Information: A Capability Assessment Toolkit (interactive toolkit)

<http://catoolkit.ojp.gov/introduction>

Building State Government Digital Preservation Partnerships: A Capability Assessment and Planning Toolkit, Version 1.0 (written guide)

http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/guides/digital_preservation_partnerships