INTRODUCTION

The approach to auditing resources needs to consider the extent to which resources influence the conformity of products and services to applicable requirements and the improvement of the QMS.

Resources are not audited in isolation from other requirements of the QMS. They are usually audited in association with organizational processes and other system elements, as relevant to the process that is the scope of the audit. Irrespective of the way the organization is structured and identifies its processes, auditors should be able to verify the adequacy and effective management of the resources that are needed to achieve intended results of the QMS.

Requirements related to resources are mainly defined in clause 7.1 of the standard grouped in five main categories. The auditing of “organizational knowledge” and “monitoring and measurement resources” are addressed in other relevant ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group papers.

This paper focuses mainly on the audit of infrastructure, environment for the operation of processes and people, and identifies references to resources in other clauses of the standard. Auditors may also find it useful to read the APG paper on auditing digital processes.
AUDITING DETERMINATION AND PROVISION OF RESOURCES

Auditors should verify, as appropriate, that the organization:

- Determines and provides the necessary resources to support the implementation, maintenance and improvement of the quality management system.

- Ensures that the organization determines and provides the necessary people.

- Establishes and maintains processes for managing its infrastructure, including buildings, workspace, associated utilities, production equipment, etc., which may include activities such as preventive maintenance and asset management.

- Ensures environment factors relevant to the operation of processes to achieve conformity of products and services.

It is important for auditors to distinguish between the requirements related to People in this clause and the requirements related to determining competence of persons set out in clause 7.2. The requirements in 7.1 assert to the need to provide the human resource. 7.2 defines the requirements related to the competence of the human resource.

Particularly in service sectors, but not exclusively, there are customer, statutory and regulatory requirements applicable to the infrastructure that relate to the conformity of products and services. These may include, for example, access to facilities, air quality, cleanliness, safety, requirements related to medical devices, etc. Auditors need to evaluate if the organization has determined the relevant requirements and can demonstrate conformity to those requirements. When licenses are required, these should be verified.

When organizations determine that resources are to be provided externally, the auditor needs to consider evaluation of requirements related to externally provided products, services and processes, set out in clause 8.4 of the standard. (see APG paper on “External Providers”)

Although requirements related to resources are mainly addressed in clause 7.1 of ISO 9001, auditors need to be aware of specific references to resources in other clauses of the standard and evaluate if the organization has:

- determined the resources needed for achieving organization’s quality objectives.

- determined the availability of resources, or the identification of resources needed, when planning changes to the QMS.

- determined the resources needed for design and development

- analysed the adequacy of resources during the management review

- documented any determined need for resources in management review outputs, when applicable

- determined and made provisions for resources required for monitoring and measurement of processes and products (e.g. acquisition of a CMM to verify dimensions that exceed the tolerance limits of the existing equipment).
INTERVIEWING TOP MANAGEMENT

As it is top management responsibility to ensure provision of the resources needed for the effective implementation of the quality management system, this is a good topic when interviewing top management and evaluating management reviews. Interview with top management will be a good opportunity to evaluate how resources are made available, considering also how the organization determines the capabilities and constraints of resources.

COLLECTING EVIDENCE

Observation is an important auditing activity for evaluating resources. Since resources are critical to achieving the intended results of the QMS, the risk-based approach to auditing should be used. When remote auditing techniques are implemented, observation of some physical infrastructure issues may be challenging. See APG paper on Remote Auditing for additional guidance on the use of remote auditing techniques. See APG paper on Auditing Digital processes for further guidance on auditing digitized and automated processes.

During site visit, auditors should communicate and share any relevant observation with the audited organization when identified, to be sure they acknowledge what is being observed. Some examples might be:

- the walls of a restaurant have mould, which should be verbally identified with the organization
- the temperature of a room is outside the specified parameter
- equipment is not properly maintained.

The auditor should note observation in a very concise manner recording where, when and what was observed. This is important if such observation is needed to substantiate a non-conformity or an issue that needs further analysis. If needed, and previously accepted by the organization, pictures can be taken as evidence.

A careful observation will provide many insights for the auditor, but it will need to be complemented by other collected evidence, including interviews with personnel, analysis of documented information, as appropriate. Any relevant verbal information provided should be confirmed at the end of the interview and recorded.

Evidence can be obtained at different stages of the audit – reviewing inputs, process performance and outputs. This should be carried out when auditing all the QMS processes and related documentation.

Auditors should avoid making subjective negative or positive judgements on the resources (such as if they are old or new, better or worse than others, etc.) The auditor should evaluate if the organization has determined the necessary resource and is able to demonstrate that it can achieve the intended results of the QMS with the available resources.
CONCLUSION

If it is found that the organization has not the adequate resources or does not manage them effectively, which may result in not conforming products or services or prevent the ability to enhance customer satisfaction, this should be documented as a nonconformity, the grading of which should be determined according to the relevant criteria, in particular the associated risks and the impacts.

Please access our websites at ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group, or at Accreditation and Assessment Practices - IAF, where you can find information about ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Groups, download Introduction, the other ISO 9001 APG and AAPG papers.

Feedback from users is welcomed by APG/AAPG and will be used to determine the need for additional guidance documents, as well as for the revision of the current ones.

In case you wish to provide your feedback, the Group Secretary contact details are also available on these sites.

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