

## The Business Value of CMMI

The rigor with which an organization conducts planning, engineering, and managing activities within an IT development or maintenance project can seriously impact cost, quality, and completion times.

The Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI®) rating is being adopted worldwide by government, military, and commercial organizations as the standard for assessing an organization's ability to perform. In fact, many government agencies now recognize the value of a CMMI maturity rating and require that designation to bid successfully on contracts.

The CMMI framework describes an evolutionary improvement path from an ad hoc, immature process to a mature, disciplined process. These processes provide the building blocks that establish the infrastructure and discipline needed to move to the higher levels of maturity that lead to improvement in project performance. The five maturity levels in the CMMI model build on the process areas from preceding levels. The Software Engineering Institute (SEI), a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and operated by Carnegie Mellon University as the governing body for CMMI, sets the standard and certifies appraisers. The SEI originally developed the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) under DOD sponsorship 15 years ago as a method of evaluating a software vendor's capabilities.

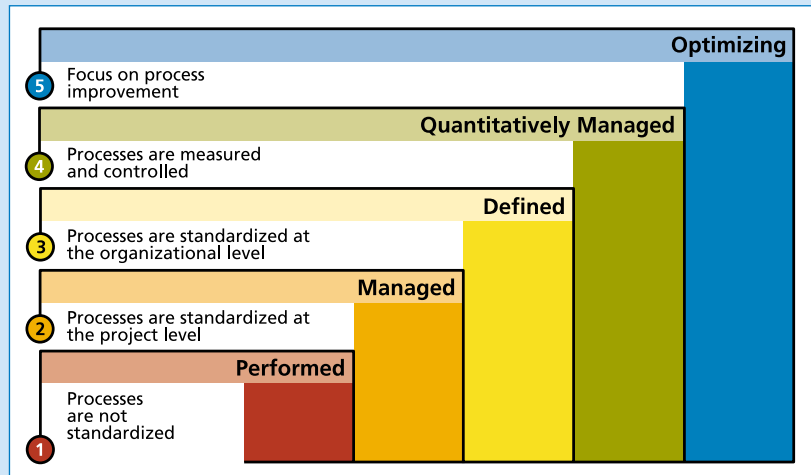
Many benefits are derived from the rigorous ratings process. An organization achieving a maturity rating can prove its ability to perform at a strong and consistent level in that area.

Additional strengths of CMMI include the ability to incorporate business goals within

process improvement, such as increasing schedule and budget predictability, productivity, quality, customer satisfaction, employee morale, and Return on Investment (ROI). Furthermore, sharing knowledge across the company helps to ensure that the strengths of an organization are applied to each engagement, rather than being people- or project-centric.

While the original CMM suite focused on software processes, CMMI covers software development plus other related fields, such as Systems Engineering, Product Acquisition, Integrated Teaming, and Requirements Development. Thus CMMI builds on and extends the principles of CMM into new areas, while updating best practices in all areas. The SEI no longer provides enhancements to CMM and is in the process of "sunsetting" CMM and encouraging firms to migrate to the more-robust CMMI suite. As a result, the

### Maturity Levels of the CMMI



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# Perspectives™

“market value” of a CMM rating will decrease over time as organizations earn the CMMI rating.

Both the CMM and CMMI models have come under criticism by some observers and practitioners who have seen organizations implement the model solely to achieve a maturity rating. Critics have cited examples of organizations “slipping back” to their previous methods of doing business after achieving their rating.

Organizations behaving in this manner may achieve their goal of securing the maturity rating that allows them to bid on federal government contracts, but they sell themselves short by not taking full advantage of the infrastructure and knowledge that their efforts have achieved. To truly improve business practices, a change in the organization’s culture is required to be able to objectively examine new data and honestly and open-mindedly decide whether to change processes.

To know whether an organization is truly implementing the CMMI, ask to see its Process Improvement Plan. Firms committed to improving their business processes are continuously planning to achieve higher levels of maturity and capability. This will be reflected in their plan and in their process improvement schedule. Also, ask about the improvements already achieved and how their processes have changed over time to enable them to reach their business goals. Organizations implementing CMMI have this information readily available and are enthusiastic about discussing their accomplishments.

For more information about ICF Consulting and the CMMI appraisal, please visit [www.icfconsulting.com/CMMI](http://www.icfconsulting.com/CMMI).