

Making Fine Forms: Common Grant Application Form Analysis, Evaluation, and Creation

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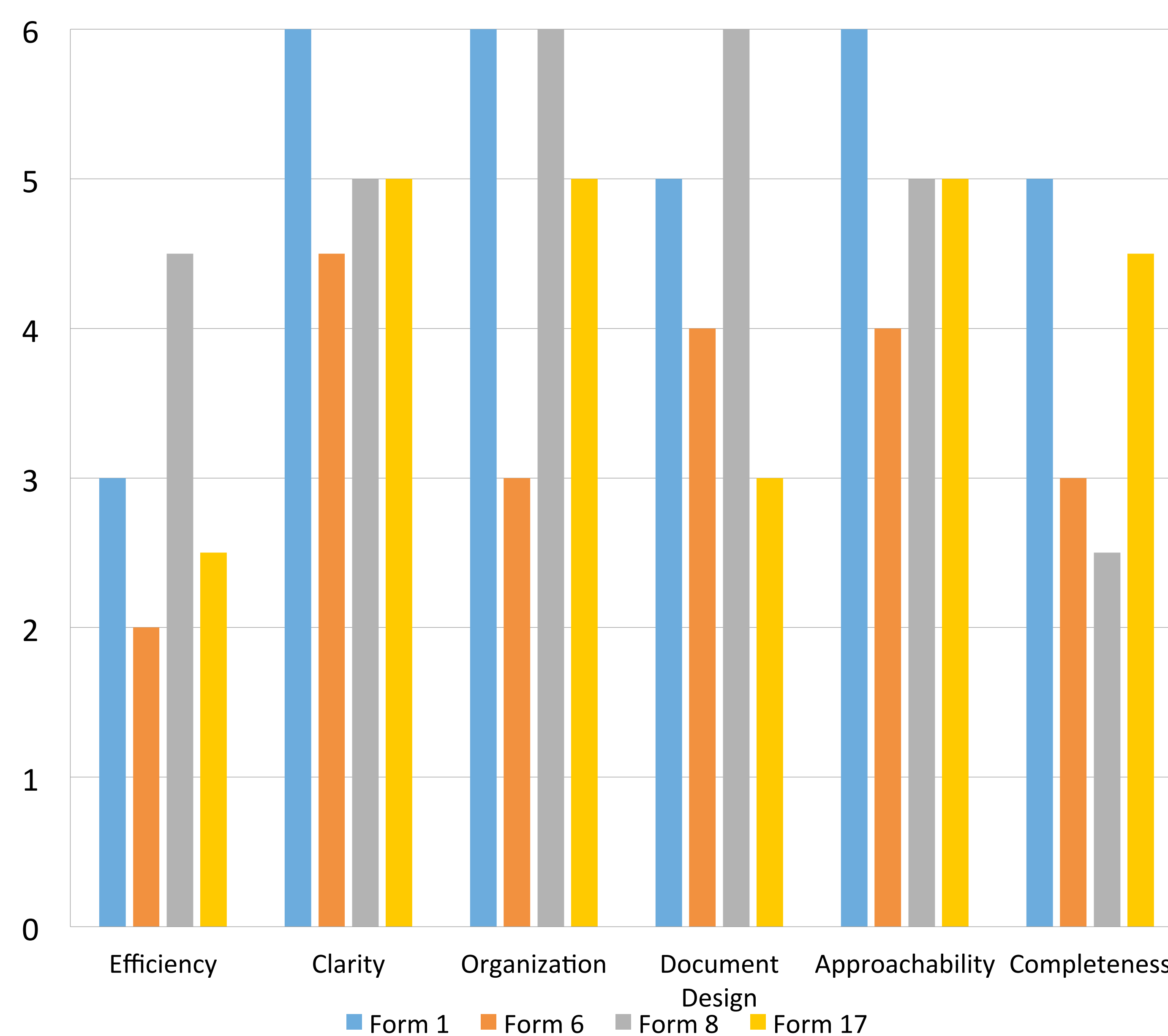
Introduction

- Common Grant Application Forms exist to help streamline the grant application process for both grantors and proposal writers.
- Clear and concise instructions allow proposal writers to spend the majority of their time creating proposals of the highest quality.
- When forms require proposal writers to spend time clarifying instructions, determining which documents are required or not, or navigating a confusing document the benefit of using a Common Grant Application Form is lost.

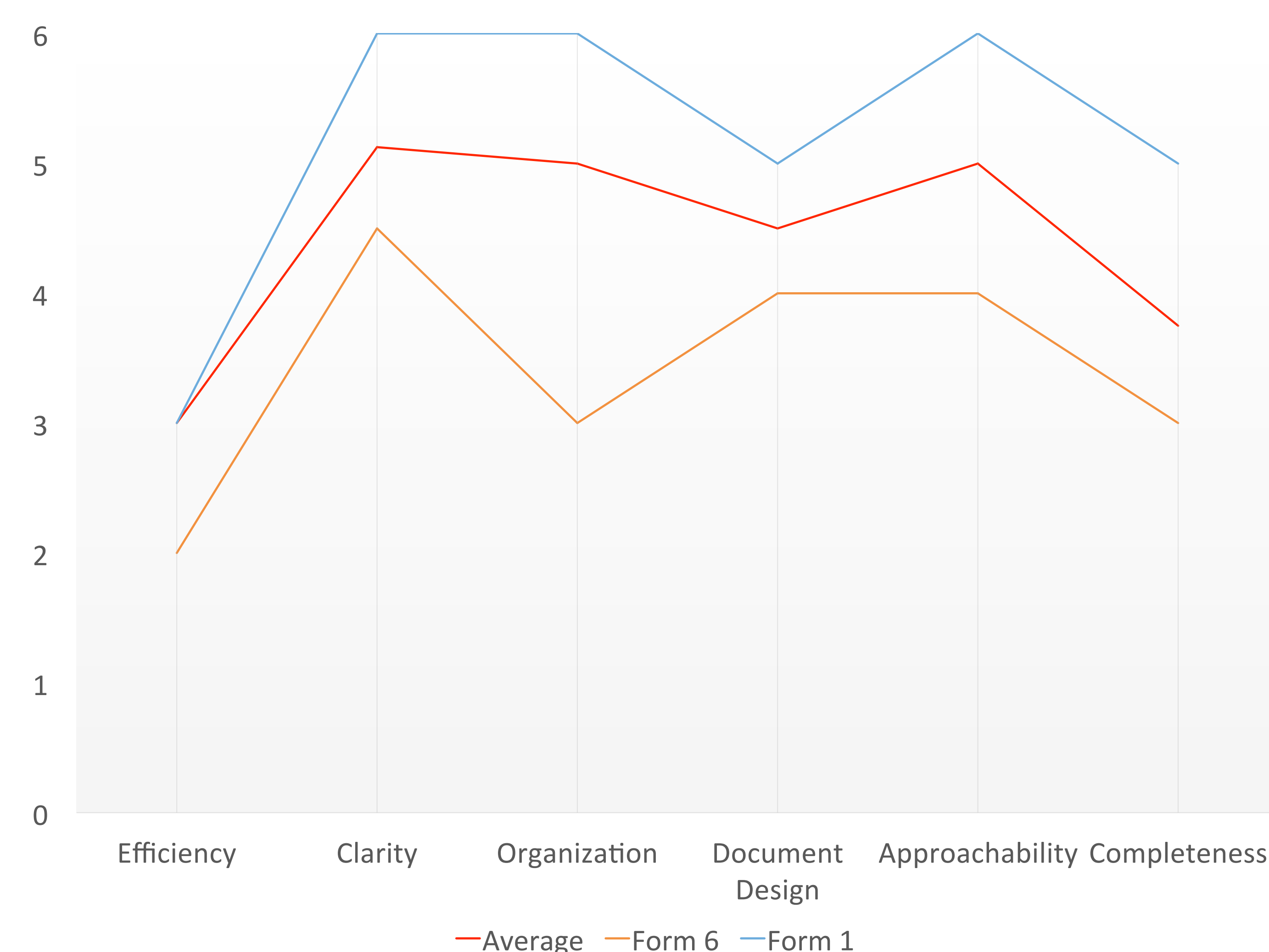
Methods

1. Develop heuristics based on standards of good document and form design to evaluate printed copies of 4 randomly selected Common Grant Application Forms.
2. Create rubric for a heuristic evaluation of the 4 forms in order to identify how each form performs in each of the following categories:
 - Efficiency
 - Clarity
 - Organization
 - Document Design
 - Approachability
 - Completeness
3. Three evaluators test forms against rubric to ensure inter-rater reliability.
4. Calculate low and high scoring forms and category.
5. Calculate composite and categorical score for each form.
6. Review highest and lowest scoring forms and categories to determine differences in corresponding areas.
7. Modify best scoring form by including particularly high scoring aspects of other forms to improve the low scoring categories and create an overall more satisfactory form.

Results



Composite Form Score by Category



Forms 6 & 1 Compared to Average Categorical Score

Limitations

- Evaluation was of both online and paper forms in a hardcopy format. This may have effected evaluator's scoring as evaluators were under the impression that all forms were meant to be printed and completed, rather than be completed and submitted online. A further study evaluating the two types of forms separately merits investigation.
- Rubric users may have focused more on identifying problems than identifying areas that preformed particularly well. This caused the identifying specifically why particular forms and categories scored so well difficult.

Conclusion

Form 1 was the highest performing form even though it was a hard copy of an editable electronic form. This kept in mind, the following edits are suggested:

- Much of the information in the "User Guide" document referred to in Form 1 already exists within Form 1. Eliminating the duplicate information from the "User Guide" and inserting the "Tips and Things to Consider" sections will give users a more complete understanding of what is expected without needing to search through multiple documents.
- Review all lists to determine which have steps to take and the order in which they need to be taken, and which contain equally important pieces of information. Proper use of numbering and bulleting lists is essential in conveying information clearly to the user.

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