

Requirements Clinic

What is it?

A requirements clinic combines the best of timely coaching, facilitated workshops, and real-time application of requirements training. Clinic participants experience an open, collaborative environment in which a skilled facilitator with requirements expertise guides a project at the critical stage of defining user needs.

EBG's requirements clinics have been leveraged by projects for a variety of purposes:

- To obtain guidance on which requirements models are most appropriate for the business domain, and how precise each model should be
- To create a timeline with interim milestones for producing requirements
- To decide how to efficiently handle issues such as baselining, tracing, formal documentation, prioritization, and change control
- To practice asking good questions to deepen requirements knowledge
- To appreciate what is working so that it can be continued and reinforced
- To identify what to adjust in existing requirements processes
- To review and obtain feedback on requirements
- To break communication barriers
- To experience how to conduct effective requirements reviews

What happens in a clinic?

Each clinic is grounded in clearly defined goals that are identified by your key team members in interviews conducted by EBG Consulting. Your team uses current requirements documentation, along with related documents such as the project charter and product vision, as the foundation for all the clinic's participants.

Depending on the status of your project and the current state of the requirements, requirements clinic activities can include:

- Developing requirements in mini-workshops (subgroups working concurrently)
- Documenting project requirements on a wall or in the team's tool repository (or both)
- Modeling user tasks
- Reinforcing or reviewing small portions of specific EBG requirements course material
- Evaluating requirements documents and models in facilitated peer reviews
- Conducting a requirements retrospective

When is it useful?

A requirements clinic is valuable at many project stages:

Initial project planning –

- To help shape your team's process and prepare team members for the upcoming work

When launching the requirements effort –

- To guide your team in their initial application of a requirements framework and techniques

In the midst of requirements gathering, analysis, and documentation –

- To evaluate the current state of the requirements and identify any areas that need attention
- To study the team's processes and make any helpful mid-course adjustments
- To reinforce good practices

At the end of requirements or product delivery –

- To find improvement opportunities
- To reinforce good practices

Who should participate?

Principally:

- Analysts
- Business customers
- Users
- Product managers
- Additionally:
- Developers
- Testers

Project and product managers can benefit by learning more about customer and user needs.

Why hold a requirements clinic?

Industry research tells us that software projects expend almost half of their total budget correcting requirements-related defects. Like going to a doctor for a health diagnosis, holding a requirements clinic can diagnose requirements difficulties while also reinforcing good practices.

A requirements clinic helps the team to increase the quality of software requirements and get a jump-start in requirements development. Clinics are a cost-effective way to reduce the costs of requirements errors while concurrently bridging any communication gaps between technical and business people.

Clinics reinforce and extend formal training (e.g., EBG's *Roadmap to Successful Requirements*). They are a means to maximize your training investment by jump-starting your team's application of classroom training to real projects.