



# What to Ask Your C3PAO for CMMC Certification

Achieving Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) is a critical step for contractors in the Defense Industrial Base (DIB). A Certified Third-Party Assessor Organization (C3PAO) plays a pivotal role in assessing your compliance with CMMC standards. To ensure you're choosing the right partner for this critical step, here are the key questions to ask your C3PAO:

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## Are You Approved by the Cyber AB as a Certified C3PAO?

Verify that the Cyber AB (formerly CMMC Accreditation Body) officially certifies the organization. This certification ensures that the C3PAO is authorized to conduct assessments and has met the requirements to evaluate organizations for CMMC compliance.

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## What Experience Do You Have in My Industry?

Ask if the C3PAO has experience working with companies in your sector. Industry-specific knowledge can streamline the assessment process and ensure the assessor understands your business's unique compliance challenges.

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## Which CMMC Levels Do You Assess?

Ensure the C3PAO is certified to assess the level of CMMC compliance your organization needs, whether Level 1 (Foundational), Level 2 (Advanced), or higher.

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## What Does Your Assessment Process Look Like?

Understanding the assessment process helps you prepare and align your organization's readiness. Key questions include:

- What steps are involved in the assessment?
- How long does the assessment typically take?
- What documentation will we need to provide?
- How will you communicate findings and results?

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## How Do You Handle Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) During the Assessment?

Since assessments involve handling sensitive data, ask about their procedures for securing Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI). Ensure the C3PAO has robust data protection measures, such as encryption and strict access controls.

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## 6. What Qualifications Do Your Assessors Have?

Inquire about the certifications and training of their assessors. Qualified professionals should have expertise in CMMC standards, NIST SP 800-171, and other relevant frameworks.

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## How Should We Prepare for the Assessment?

The success of your CMMC certification depends on thorough preparation. Ask the C3PAO for guidance on:

- Reviewing and updating your System Security Plan (SSP).
- Addressing gaps in your Plan of Action and Milestones (POA&M).
- Conducting internal readiness reviews or mock assessments.

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## How Do You Handle Non-Compliance Findings?

If the assessment reveals areas of non-compliance, it's essential to know how the C3PAO will handle it. Will they provide detailed feedback and allow remediation, or will you need to reapply for assessment?

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## What Is Your Approach to Scheduling and Timelines?

CMMC certification timelines can impact your ability to bid on defense contracts. Ensure the C3PAO's availability aligns with your deadlines and can provide a clear timeline for completing the assessment.

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## What Are the Costs Involved?

CMMC assessments can vary in cost depending on the scope and level of compliance required. Ask for a detailed breakdown of the costs, including any potential additional fees for re-assessments or follow-up work.

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## How Do You Stay Up to Date on CMMC and Regulatory Changes?

CMMC is evolving, and your C3PAO should stay current with the latest developments. Ask how they keep their team informed about updates and ensure their processes align with the latest CMMC standards.

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## Can You Provide References?


Reputable C3PAOs should be able to provide references or case studies demonstrating their experience and success in conducting CMMC assessments.

Systems Engineering is not a C3PAO assessor. We do not conduct CMMC Compliance Assessments. We provide CMMC Registered Practitioners and security consultants who will prepare your organization for the CMMC Assessment. We can connect you to C3PAO resources.

## Expert Support for CMMC Compliance

As you prepare for assessment, Systems Engineering provides guidance, IT integration, and compliance support every step of the way. [Contact us](#) to stay secure and competitive.

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