Increasing Reliability in the Use of Rubrics for Program Prioritization

The reliability of using a rubric can be improved by following a few simple suggestions. The idea is to help ensure that your evaluators understand what they are evaluating and use the tool in the best possible way.

Preparation, Prior to Scoring
1. It is essential to begin with a well prepared rubric. Be sure to have clearly written descriptors for each of the scale points. For example rather than simply having the term “poor,” describe what is meant by poor, such as “services do not meet the needs of the customer or are not timely.” This ensures that the evaluators are performing their ratings on the same dimensions.
2. With the evaluation team, have a discussion of the scales, their descriptors, and any other terms or definitions important to the process. Discuss examples or go through practice exercises so that everyone has a common understanding of the standard by which to recognize and evaluate the evidence presented. For example, explore what it means to be a mandated, required, or essential program or service to help ensure consistency among individual ratings. Construct and expand definitions, as needed, prior to beginning the scoring process. This will help to ensure that each evaluator has a shared understanding of the scale dimensions and how to apply them.
3. With the evaluation team, have a discussion of the Divisional mission and values to provide the framework needed to guide the evaluation process.

Scoring Process
1. Before starting to score, familiarize yourself with the rubric.
2. Read through each report* without scoring, placing them in piles of 3 to 5 groups indicating your first impression of their overall quality from high to low.
3. Begin scoring, and take notes on the forms as you go to indicate why you scored items as you did. As you score you may decide to move a report from one group to another.
4. To the extent possible, perform the ratings of all the reports close in time. By performing the ratings close in time the evaluators have a tendency to be more internally consistent in their responses.
5. If you work over several days, go back each day and review a few past ratings before beginning each session. This also will help the evaluator be more internally consistent in their responses.
6. Record your scores according the process outlined by the Division coordinator.

*Alternatively you may score each question of the rubric across all reports.

After Scoring
1. Assemble the evaluation team and discuss the groupings and/or ratings.
2. As the discussion proceeds, the team reaches consensus on categorization or overall scores.
3. The Division coordinator assembles necessary information to provide to the VP.