
Project Quality: Training and Guidance

Summary

This page is an information resource to support a quality-based approach to APEC Projects. This page contains copies of training materials produced by the APEC Secretariat Project Management Unit (PMU) as part of the PMU training and outreach program, and over time, more resources will be added to support the delivery of successful projects in APEC.

If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact PMU at [\[email protected\]](#)

Background

APEC-funded projects are at the core of the APEC process – over 2300 projects have been completed since 1993, delivering outcomes in support of sustainable economic growth and prosperity across the Asia-Pacific region. In broad terms, APEC undertakes projects to:

An APEC project is successfully delivered when the PO can demonstrate, through evidence, that all the BMC-approved outcomes proposed in the Project Proposal have been achieved. Strong APEC projects are distinguished by a *quality-based* approach that is applied across the entire project lifecycle, from concept note development to project completion and beyond, to ensure outcome sustainability.

Training Materials

[PMU Presentation: Overview and Development of Quality Concept Notes](#)

[PMU Presentation: Development of Quality Project Proposals and Budget Plans](#)

Key Principles

The following are some key principles to apply during the start of the project lifecycle:

For Concept Notes:

- Avoid using technical jargon and make sure you express yourself clearly.
- Become familiar with the scoring criteria within the APEC Scoring Template. Understand the eligibility rules that apply to the APEC project fund that you are applying to.
- Concept Notes should be developed as early as possible. Early development means that the project idea can be informally socialised within the proposing forum before the formal endorsement phase and improved with feedback or commitments from other economies to participate during implementation. Early development will also give time to incorporate any [cross-fora](#) perspectives and to plan cross-fora involvement.
- You should avoid duplicating or replicating completed projects, unless your project is a follow-up initiative, or is the next stage of previously completed work. Use the Project Database to see if your project idea has been done before. Your Program Director can advise if similar project ideas are being explored in other fora, in which case, consider cross-fora collaboration.
- Your project outcomes are what matter most. While you don't need to state the outcomes until you complete a Project Proposal, it makes sense to have some draft outcomes written down as you develop your Concept Note.
- Concept Notes should avoid the trap of listing multiple, listed objectives. Remember, the objective is the overarching aim or goal of your project and can be expressed in a few sentences. Outcomes are the specific changes or impacts that your project creates – don't confuse the objective with the outcomes!

For Project Proposals:

- Project Proposals are assessed by the Secretariat against five quality indicators: *relevance, impact, effectiveness, sustainability* and *efficiency*. Each question in the Project Proposal corresponds to one of these areas – for example 'Outputs' and 'Outcomes' correspond to *impact*, and 'Budget' corresponds to *efficiency*.
- Preparing a clear, detailed and well-thought out proposal ensures your project is off to a great start. Lack of clarity, ambiguities and missing detail will not only slow the assessment process, it may lead to implementation problems once your project begins.
- Project Proposals should evidence a simple *program logic*. There should be a 'causal chain' between the outputs and activities in your project and the planned outcomes. Your outcomes must in turn be aligned with the objective of your project.
- You must develop indicators to measure each outcome. Indicators need not be complex, but they must be capable of producing the evidence you need to demonstrate that the outcome was achieved.

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- Give yourself time to deliver your project. Ensure you have enough time to prepare for events. Don't rush supporting work like research, surveys or best-practice analysis. Plan for the unexpected and understand the way that the different parts of your project fit together. Describe all the risks that could impact your project. How will you manage them?
 - Look at what has gone before. Use the Project Database to see how other POs have implemented projects that are similar to yours, and don't forget to review Completion Reports from related projects.
 - Understand what expenses are allowable and non-allowable.
 - Ensure that all project participants are made aware of the obligation to participate in the Longer-Term Evaluation of APEC Projects.

For Contracting and Procurement in APEC Projects:

- Contracting takes time. Please make sure you allow time to properly complete all the required procurement steps. You will be given advice about timing in the Letter of Acceptance or during the quality assessment process. You will find information on Procurement in Chapter 11 of the [Guidebook on APEC Projects](#) and in the [PO Toolkit](#).
- High quality *Terms of Reference* (TOR) and *Requests for Proposal* (RFP) documentation are essential for good contracting outcomes. These documents form the 'backbone' of the final contract. It is essential that TORs and RFPs are detailed and completely clear on the work expected by the contractor. All outputs and deliverables must be clearly specified and it helps to give specific outputs (such as reporting) consistent titles throughout. There is guidance on developing TORs [here](#).
- All TORs and RFPs must be approved by the Secretariat before the contract can be finalised. The Secretariat will request changes to enhance TORs and RFPs where required. For minor contracts, it is important to ensure that potential contractors are aware that the TORs that apply to their work are not finalised, until approved and presented in a contract or work undertaking.
- All contracts and work undertakings are legal agreements between the contractor and the Secretariat (not the PO). All terms and conditions, including payment, are subject to acceptance by the Secretariat. Work should never start until both parties have signed the contract or undertaking.
- Many projects engage contractors to undertake research, analysis and surveys. Always ensure that such work is properly described in terms of scope, methodology, duration and format. Caution is advised when conducting surveys: be clear on who will be targeted, who will actually conduct the survey (PO or contractor?), what constitutes an acceptable response rate; and what will the contractor do if response rates are unacceptably low.
- Always outline the expected format for information products (including final reports, best practice guidelines and so forth) including length, contents and format.
- POs work closely with contractors. POs are responsible for ensuring that the day to day work of contractors follows the scope of services outlined in the contract or work undertaking. POs must contact the Secretariat immediately if they feel that a contractor is not meeting contractual obligations. POs should maintain regular contact with contractors to ensure that project related issues can be communicated effectively.

Source: <https://www.apec.org/Projects/Project-Quality-Training-and-Guidance>.