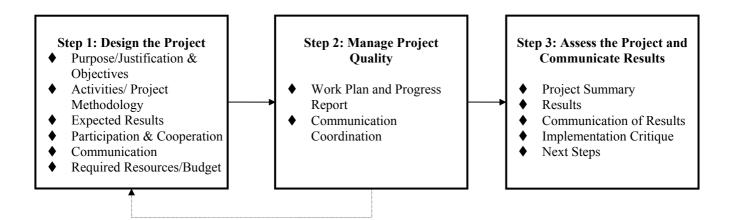
## **STEP 2: MANAGE PROJECT QUALITY**



## **Questions to Ask Yourself:**

- How are you assessing your progress against the project purpose, objectives and intended results? To whom are you giving periodic progress reports? Are they delivered on time?
- What system of communication have you established with your partners and within the project staff?
- What might happen to delay your project? How are you planning to prevent delays or preparing for delays?
- How are you monitoring your expenses? What will you do if you find that you are not within budget?

## **Work Plan and Progress Report**

This section will help you to manage your project and to complete the APEC progress report forms found in Appendix A. A work plan is your original plan for the project, what is to be done, when it should be done, and who should do it. The progress report is a second part of the work plan, in which you compare the progress of your project to the original plan. Thus the work plan and the progress report together

- Lay out the plan for implementing your project, and
- Help you to monitor the status of your project.

The work plan is often called a "living document" because the project manager is continually using the work plan to review what has occurred, to compare that with what was planned, and to make adjustments accordingly. Most of the information in this section is for the project manager to use in order to monitor the progress of the project—to make sure it is going well, achieving the desired results, and staying on time and within budget.

As soon as your project begins, pay particular attention to what information is required for APEC projects. For more information about project requirements, read "Report Progress" in this chapter and review Appendix A. For additional project management forms, see Appendix B.

## Project Plan

The plan delineates at least three things: what tasks are to be done, when the tasks should be done, and who should complete each task (or be responsible for the task's completion). This is the kind of information you will have to report in your APEC progress report (found in Appendix A). The work plan also helps you and others to see how you have conceptualized the project and how you will complete it (see the additional project management forms in Appendix B for related forms). To complete your work plan,

- Delineate tasks,
- Assign staff responsibilities, and
- Set task schedules and milestones.

### **Tips for Success: The Work Plan**

- Use and update the work plan to periodically review project performance against the project purpose, objectives and intended results.
- Treat the work plan as a *living document*, to be used throughout the life of the project.
- Get staff involved in creating and updating the work plan.
- Answer any questions or requests from partners quickly.
- Write progress reports that measure progress against original project purpose, objectives, intended results and longer term outcomes and submit them on time.

### **Delineate Tasks**

Once you have identified your activity, your next step is to identify the tasks that must be undertaken as a part of that activity. The major tasks that you will carry out will vary with your stated activity. Exhibit 4 provides examples of the types of tasks that are usually conducted for three different types of projects—projects that

- Produce technical reports,
- Develop symposiums or seminars, and
- Provide training or professional development.

EXHIBIT 4  Typical Project Tasks							
Product	Typical Tasks						
Technical report Journal article	<ol> <li>State research questions.</li> <li>Review literature.</li> <li>Identify data sources needed to answer research questions.</li> <li>Conduct data collection activities such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, site visits. Strive to make your activities sensitive to culture and disaggregated by sex. Analyze data.</li> <li>Prepare report that includes an assessment of subgroup (e.g., gender) differences in impact and that elaborates and explains any subgroup differences that the data may reveal.</li> </ol>						
Symposium/seminar	<ol> <li>Identify issues of most concern to APEC members.</li> <li>Determine format of meeting—invited speakers, small-group discussions, and panels, mindful of APEC objectives for full participation of women.</li> <li>Make necessary arrangements—commission papers, invite speakers, arrange for meeting place.</li> <li>Conduct meeting.</li> <li>Provide written report of meeting.</li> <li>Establish evaluation criteria.</li> <li>Assess usefulness of meeting.</li> </ol>						
Training workshop Professional development	<ol> <li>Assess needs of men and women in the target audience.</li> <li>Identify appropriate participants.</li> <li>Develop materials.</li> <li>Make arrangements for training/workshop sessions, mindful of cultural and gender differences.</li> <li>Conduct training/workshop sessions.</li> <li>Ask men and women participants to assess quality of training.</li> <li>Assess usefulness of training/workshop for men and women.</li> </ol>						

## **Assign Staff Responsibilities**

For each of the tasks you have just listed, decide which staff person will be responsible. Several staff may work on the same task, but only one person should be ultimately responsible for that task.

#### **Set Task Timelines and Milestones**

To ensure that your project is completed on time, you should develop a schedule that includes a timetable for the completion of critical milestones for each of your tasks. **Milestones** are significant or key actions, results, or events that occur. Exhibit 5 lists examples of the types of milestones you should consider for your own project schedule.

This schedule can take various forms; two examples are:

- A list of milestones and the deadline for each; or
- A chart to indicate when activities, milestones, and deliverables (i.e., interim products and final products) will occur.

# **EXHIBIT 5 Types of Milestones**

- Meetings (a kickoff meeting or periodic project meetings)
- Progress reports
- Interim products (sampling plans, surveys, or workshop agendas)
- Final products and events (a report, symposium, or workshop)

Be realistic about the time required to conduct the activities in your project, and give all participants time to do their jobs well, taking into account family responsibilities. In fact, add a little more time to the schedule than you think you will need—projects frequently encounter unexpected delays from illness, conflicting schedules, holiday leave, and leaves of absence. Exhibit 6 depicts an example of a project schedule.

	EXHIBIT 6 Project Schedule for Researching Technology Transfer					
	Milestone	<b>Expected Completion Date</b>				
1.	Obtain background materials from participating member economies and conduct other background research.	February 1				
2.	Develop draft survey that takes into consideration men and women respondents.	April 15				
3.	Develop final survey.	May 15				

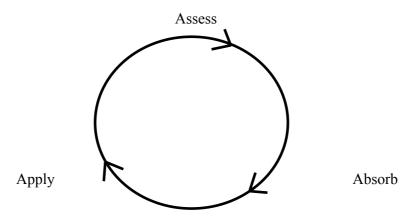
4.	Prepare progress report for next APEC meeting.	May 17
5.	Mail survey.	June 15
6.	Receive surveys back from APEC members.	July 30
7.	Enter data (disaggregated by sex) and analyze results. Evaluate whether results meet anticipated goals.	September 30
8.	Prepare technical report.	November 30
9.	Prepare academic article.	December 30
10.	Prepare final report and summary of lessons learned.	January 30

## **Project Status**

The key to managing quality is to continuously assess the progress and products against the original project purpose, objectives and plan and intended results. This means monitoring the status of your project throughout the course of your project. This process allows you to adjust your actions, so that you work more efficiently and effectively and the quality of your product improves. Continuous assessment is a cyclical process that encompasses the following steps:

- *Assessing* the activity,
- Absorbing the feedback as information on how to better attain project objectives, and
- Applying that new information to your project management.

In other words, your first assessment step should be to ask, "How well is my project meeting its objectives and implementing its activities?" Then ask, "How can I and others involved in the project use what I have just learned to improve the process"? Your final step of the cycle is to take action and apply the recommendations. This cyclical process (see diagram below) is used at regular intervals to measure the effects of your actions.



As you manage your project, this process will provide structure to your assessment activities. It will also enable you to demonstrate your responsiveness to the project's evolution. Exhibit 7 gives examples of possible problems and solutions for each of the elements of Step 2, "Managing Project Quality."

# EXHIBIT 7 Possible Challenges and Solutions for Implementing the Assessment Process

### Challenges

- Skills training is not successful in some areas because of a lack of equipment/resources.
- Information is unintentionally understood differently by different partners.
- Responses are uneven, or the number of participants is unequal across APEC partners.

#### Solutions

- Revise the training to better match the currently available resources, or help the group that lacks the necessary resources to obtain them.
- Disseminate new, clarifying information, or bring In people who have expertise in identified areas to help.
- Solicit the information or participation of the underrepresented groups by telephoning, etc., or discuss with underrepresented partners what would make the project more appealing. Review project to identify possible barriers to participation by target groups.

The more frequently you monitor your project, the greater the chance that you will discover any problems and be able to resolve them.

Your project will have a better chance of progressing smoothly if you plan well and try to *anticipate* potential challenges, and develop a detailed work plan. The greater number of actions performed initially, the fewer necessary reactions later. However, unexpected events will occur and it is always best to deal with them immediately.

### **Keep on Schedule**

If you find that you are falling behind schedule, you have a few options. You may

- Reschedule so that remaining milestones are achieved more quickly,
- Add staff, or
- Adjust the remaining schedule to reflect delay.

Whatever you choose to do, make sure that you promptly address any threats to staying on schedule and readjust your work plan for any changes that you have made.

### **Manage Costs**

At regular intervals during the project you should compare the amount you have actually spent on a specific activity with the amount you budgeted. You may make these comparisons weekly, monthly, or quarterly, or you may do it when you reach pre-specified levels of expenditures or complete pre-specified milestones. If you find that you are spending more than you budgeted, you will need to take corrective actions by identifying with your staff and your partners other costs that can be reduced. Occasionally, some travel can be eliminated. Sometimes aspects of data collection, analysis, materials development, or a report can be simplified, thus requiring less labor costs.

One effective way to monitor your budget is by using the "markers" you set on your budget (and on your work plan). These markers will be the points at which you compare how much you had planned to spend with how much you have actually spent. For example, say that you are planning a year-long project and anticipate that it will have equal expenditures each month. One-quarter of the budget will have been spent after three months, one-half after six months, three-quarters after nine months, and all of the funds by the end of the year. If, after you have been running the project for four months, you find that half of the budget has been spent, you will know that you are overspending. Your markers indicate that you should have gone two more months before spending 50 percent of the budget. Thus, you must take steps to cut back expenditures if you are to remain within budget.

Your project will probably not have equal monthly expenditures, but the same idea holds. Mark when each quarter of your funds should have been spent. If you reach that marker early, you are overspending; if you reach it late, you are underspending. Depending on the funding and scope of your project, you may decide to monitor your spending even more closely and use 10 percent increments. In this case, you would check your spending against your budget after you had spent 10%, 20%, 30%, and so on of your total funds.

If you are spending more or less than you budgeted, comparing the initial budget with actual expenditures item by item will help you to identify which items cost more or less than their budget estimates. Then you will need to readjust your budget.

If your project is not self-funded and you find you are significantly under or over budget (+/- 10 percent), you should report this to the project funder (s), together with an explanation, so that they may adjust their budgets and reports. The funder(s) may also be able to offer advice to help you get back on track.

If you find that you are exceeding your budget you have some options. You may:

- Review the budget for unnecessary expenses like unused equipment or items of higher quality than needed,
- Cut out some secondary tasks, or
- Find additional funding.

**Remember:** If you frequently compare your costs to your budget, you will be able to recognize and deal with cost overruns while they are small and take corrective action before they threaten your project's ability to attain its objectives.

### **Coordination of Communication**

Because communication is vital to every project's funding, progress, and success, you should have a communication plan. Your communication coordination chart specifies who all your partners are—the people and organizations supporting your project, financially or otherwise—and how and when to contact each partner. The communication plan should also note what project issues are of particular concern or interest to your partners, and should be disaggregated by sex. The communication plan should also note any specific communications requirements of partners and target groups, for example, whether they have Internet access.

Here are some suggestions for improving your communication with your partners:

- Remember that rapid dissemination of reports, proceedings, and other project products will benefit all, particularly nonnative English speakers.
- Respond promptly to all communications and be sure to do what you say you will do (such as sending out progress reports). If you do these two things, you will help ensure high morale and interest in your project.
- Whenever possible, use e-mail to speed communication. Before you do, however, make sure that the respondent not only has an e-mail account but also checks it frequently.

Note that the project's staff should be included as partners. Staff meetings should be scheduled well in advance, held regularly, and specified in the communication plan.

Exhibit 8 demonstrates possible challenges and solutions for communicating with partners.

EXHIBIT 8  Possible Challenges and Solutions of Communicating with Partners								
Challenge	Solution							
Frequent miscommunication among staff	<ul> <li>Hold a staff meeting to determine new procedures,</li> <li>Post activity checklists for each staff member in central office, or</li> <li>Hold staff meetings more frequently.</li> </ul>							
Dissatisfaction of an APEC partner	<ul> <li>Communicate with partner to understand concerns,</li> <li>Devise a plan of action together,</li> <li>Schedule more meetings with partner, or</li> <li>Send more frequent progress reports and request immediate feedback.</li> </ul>							

## **Report Progress**

For your project, you will have to provide certain information to the appropriate working group, APEC Secretariat and the Budget and Management Committee (BMC) or other funding agency. For APEC, this information will include:

- 1. Evaluation questionnaires filled out by project participants
- 2. A list of all project participants
- 3. All project products or output
- 4. Progress report
- 5. Evaluation report

An overview of the APEC project monitoring process appears below. For more information see Appendix A or the APEC web page at

http://www.apecsec.org.sg/apec\_organization/policy\_procedure/eval\_reporting/eval\_reporting.html.

### **APEC Project Monitoring Process:**

- 1. Upon approval of projects, the projects (both APEC Central Funded and self-funded ones) are supervised by the project overseers or by project steering committees. Unless the Chair/Lead Shepherd concerned is also the project overseer, usually the APEC for awould rely on the project overseers to report on the projects to the fora.
- 2. The APEC for aare responsible for monitoring the performance of the projects and for assuring the completion of program goals and objectives. The APEC Secretariat should assist the APEC for ain monitoring by finalizing the request for proposals (RFP), signing the contracts, and examining the reports from the project overseers.
- 3. The project overseers must circulate questionnaires for the participants of seminars, symposia, and short-term training courses to complete during the activity. Annex A contains the basic questions, which should be included in the questionnaires for the participants. The project overseers may use it as a basis and build further questions onto them. Annex A information may be found in Appendix B or at: (http://www.apecsec.org.sg/apec\_organization/policy\_procedure/eval\_reporting/AnnexA.html)
- 4. The project overseers should report the progress in implementing the project. The APEC Progress Report Form appears in Appendix B or may be found at the web page below. The BMC asks all APEC fora to provide progress reports for all the projects before the two regular BMC meetings. Since the HRD meetings are generally prior to BMC meetings, progress reports should be prepared for the HRD meetings and these reports can then be forwarded to the BMC. The Chairs/Lead Shepherds should collect the reports from the project overseers. The Chairs/Lead Shepherds should have an overall view of all the projects undertaken by their fora before submitting to the BMC via the APEC Secretariat. Annex B information may be found at the end of this chapter or at: <a href="http://www.apecsec.org.sg/apec\_organization/policy\_procedure/eval\_reporting/AnnexB.html">http://www.apecsec.org.sg/apec\_organization/policy\_procedure/eval\_reporting/AnnexB.html</a>
- 5. Upon completion of the projects, the project overseers should complete the evaluation reports (form incorporated into Step #3 project management forms in Appendix C) found in Annex C of the Guidebook on APEC Projects). The reports should reflect the findings from the questionnaires completed by the participants and be sent to the small groups together with the questionnaires and the list of participants, disaggregated by sex. In the case of projects such as surveys or publications, the project overseers should provide the evaluation reports with the end products (in draft or final form). The specific APEC Evaluation Form from Annex C may be found at:

  http://www.apecsec.org.sg/apec\_organization/policy\_procedure/eval\_reporting/AnnexC.html
- 6. All APEC fora including sub-fora of the Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI) should set up a small group comprising at least two or three members. The small groups receive the project overseer's evaluation reports and assess the outcomes of the projects for meeting the project objectives (for both women and men). The small groups should then forward their findings together with the questionnaires and the list of participants or the end product, as the case may be, to the Chairs/Lead Shepherds for comments or endorsement before submitting to the BMC via the Secretariat.
- 7. Multi-year projects, like one-off projects, are required to complete evaluation reports when the intended tasks covered by an approved unit have been implemented. For example, CTI 06/97, CTI 07/98 and CTI 08/99 are a series of multi-year training courses. Evaluation reports should be completed when CTI 06/97, CTI 07/98 and CTI 08/99 are completed respectively.
- 8. The APEC Secretariat will enter comments, if any, into the evaluation report. The evaluation report will be disseminated to the BMC. Supporting documents such as the questionnaires, the list of participants and end products will be kept by the Secretariat for BMC members' inspection.
- 9. The BMC will assess the reports and provide the feedback on the assessments to the APEC fora where appropriate.

- 10. In case the Directors (Program), including the one designated as Project Coordinator at the APEC Secretariat, judge that a project does not comply with the BMC reporting requirements, the APEC Secretariat should send a request to Chairs/Lead Shepherds/Project Overseers for improvement.
- 11. Upon receiving the progress and evaluation reports at the Secretariat, Directors (Program) should indicate whether the full progress or evaluation reports have been received and the reasons (if any) for the project not to comply with the reporting requirements in the remarks columns of the summary, which will be reported at the BMC.
- 12. When there is a lack of necessary elements, and if the Directors (Program) at the APEC Secretariat including the one designated as Project Coordinator judge any serious problems, it should be reported and submitted to the BMC in addition to the summary. If necessary, the BMC may give some comments in order to ensure and promote the smooth execution of APEC projects.
- 13. In case the projects fail to achieve appropriate reporting standards, the BMC will consider suspending the funding for future projects until the Chairs/Lead Shepherds achieve an acceptable reporting standard for the BMC.

Generally, progress reports are designed to document your project's progress over time. You should decide before beginning your project how often you will write such reports. For APEC, you must submit a progress report to your Chair or Lead Shepherd before each BMC meeting (see "APEC Project Monitoring and Reporting Procedures" diagram above). The APEC Progress Report Form appears in Appendix A or may be found on the APEC web page.<sup>3</sup>

How frequently you write the reports will depend on the length and intensity of your project. For example, a project spanning three years may need quarterly (every three months) and annual reports, while one lasting six months may need monthly reports. Make sure to consult all of your project partners and funding agencies for their preferences or requirements. Whatever the frequency, the content of the progress reports should contain the following elements:

- Work accomplished over the past reporting period, including specific tasks and products;
- Results from your ongoing assessment, including the problems encountered, subsequent solutions, and any deviations from the substantive, time, and cost factors as specified in the work plan; and
- Expectations for the next reporting period, including any real or anticipated barriers and any corresponding adjustments to the schedule or budget management.

As soon as the progress reports are completed, they should be distributed to everyone involved with the project, especially the funding agency. Sending progress reports out on time is an effective way to keep the level of morale and interest high and to show that the project is well organized.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> http://www.apecsec.org.sg/apec\_organization/policy\_procedure/eval\_reporting/AnnexB.html

## CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING PROJECT QUALITY

	Item	Res	ponse		Comments
Work P	lan and Progress report				
<b>√</b>	Have you filled out a work plan, including the tasks, staff, and due dates?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
<b>√</b>	Have you identified milestones that are essential to completion of your projects?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
$\overline{\checkmark}$	Do your milestones relate to your activities and objectives?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
<b>√</b>	Do you routinely compare actual costs with your budget and adjust the project if costs exceed budget?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
<b>√</b>	Are you sending APEC regular progress reports using the APEC Progress Report form found in Appendix B?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
<b>√</b>	Have you determined what you will do if you are delayed?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
Coordin	nation of Communication				
<b>√</b>	Do all staff members have the addresses, e-mail, phone, and fax numbers for each contact person?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
$\overline{\checkmark}$	Have you identified the issues and events that require discussion among the partners/staff?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
$\overline{\checkmark}$	Have you scheduled regular telephone conferences with partners/staff?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
$\checkmark$	Do you have procedures to enable your partners to review all interim products?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
<b>√</b>	Were the links clear between the products/events and the project objectives?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
<b>√</b>	Did you and your APEC partners schedule regular dates for reports?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
$\overline{\checkmark}$	Are the progress reports submitted on time to the project director and all partners?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
<b>√</b>	Do the reports indicate potential challenges and solutions?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	
<b>√</b>	Do you consult the APEC Secretariat before spending, or committing to spend, money?	Yes	No 🗌	?????	