

TC PROGRAMME QUALITY CRITERIA

1. Introduction and Policy Reference

The quality criteria for TC programme/projects are based on the central criterion of the Technical Cooperation Strategy (The 2002 Review¹) which states that ‘**A project meets the central criterion if it addresses an area of real need in which there is a national programme enjoying strong government commitment and support. Such projects take two forms: (a) those that produce a tangible socio-economic benefit in an area in which nuclear technology holds a comparative advantage; and (b) those that clearly support an enabling environment for the use of nuclear technologies (such as safety infrastructures or energy planning). The central criterion thus embraces the government's commitment to sustaining the benefits of technical co-operation activities.**’

The TC programme/project quality criteria have been implemented since 1997². They were incorporated into the PCMF system in 2005. Guidelines for the quality assessment of project designs and a quality checklist were developed and are regularly updated to facilitate the application of the quality criteria.

2. TC Quality Criteria³

The quality criteria are applicable across all phases of the TC programme cycle. These are addressed at the planning stage, during the process of project design and consolidation of the programme prior to submission for approval. Similarly, the criteria are applied throughout implementation, progress monitoring and reporting, and at achievement assessment prior to closure of the project. A quality-based planning process lays the foundation for efficient project implementation and effective delivery of the programme.

Quality criteria are applicable to all national, regional and interregional projects, based on the project documentation developed using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA).

The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is used as the standard project cycle management tool (e.g. for planning, implementation and evaluation). The LFA provides a systematic process for involving stakeholders, facilitating dialogue and documenting key relevant dimensions for the project. The LFA provides assurance for clarity, consistency and cause-effect logic for the expected project results, providing SMART⁴ indicators for project implementation and outcome, as well as taking into consideration the relevant context and risks associated with the project environment.

The TC quality criteria and their key aspects include:

A. Relevance is the degree to which the programme or project objectives are consistent with end users’ requirements, country needs, and partners’ policies. Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate, given changed circumstances.

¹ GOV/INF/2002/8/Mod.1 dated 25 November 2002

² The TC quality criteria have been reviewed in July 2016 by an interdivisional TC working group to ensure that they are still relevant and consistent.

³ Please refer to TC Programme Planning and Design Glossary for interpretation of standard terms (http://pcmf.iaea.org/DesktopModules/PCMF/docs/2017_18_Docs/other/Planning_and_Design_Glossary_2016_07_05.pdf)

⁴ SMART: Specific – Measurable – Attainable – Relevant – Time-bound.

Indicators for Relevance:

- Clear linkages with the Country Programme Framework (CPF) and, in the absence of the CPF, to the national development plans;
- Alignment with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) where applicable;
- Nuclear or related nuclear technologies that have clear comparative advantages and are relevant to addressing priority development needs with clear cost-benefit values and potential for long-term sustainability;
- Connection between the programme/project and the on-going efforts of the IAEA and other programmes to create appropriate synergies;
- Continued national and international partnerships;
- Institutional and human capacity development efforts to promote further technological self-reliance at national and regional levels;
- High prospects for outcomes and impact;
- Potential negative social and environmental effects being avoided and other cross cutting issues including climate change risk mitigation/adaptation and gender equality inclusiveness considered.

B. Ownership/Commitment is demonstrated when Member States exercise effective leadership over their programmes and projects.

Indicators for Ownership/Commitment:

- Member State commitment to the programme/project is reflected by the allocation of adequate human, technical and financial resources and the provision of an enabling environment;
- A consultative process has taken place and all programme stakeholders have participated in the planning and preparation of programme/project documentation;
- The roles of the national institutions and stakeholders expected to participate in the project are well defined;
- There are indications of commitment from relevant authorities;
- Government cost sharing, funding from other partners is ensured, where applicable.

C. Sustainability refers to the continuation of benefits after the completion of a programme or project; the probability of continued long term benefits; and the resilience to risk of the net benefit over time.

Indicators for Sustainability:

- The project is linked to the country's medium/long term goals and/or strategic programme;
- The application of relevant technology and a viable socioeconomic model is supported by the business plan of the counterpart institution when applicable;
- Downstream mechanisms and modalities are in place to ensure effective linkages between counterparts and end users;
- Partnerships with UN specialized agencies, international development organizations and non-profit organizations are identified and in place whenever required;
- Strategic partnership with regional agreements and among Member States within the regional agreements are promoted;
- Public/private partnerships are taken into account wherever relevant;
- Use of national and regional expertise is promoted;
- Realistic programme budget plans are in place;
- Adequate physical and institutional infrastructure, as well as human resources to support the project is in place.

D. Efficiency is a measure of the productivity of the implementation process and how economically resources (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results. Efficiency answers the question: “Could the same results have been attained at a lower cost?”

Indicators for Efficiency:

- Adequate and realistic project work plan to ensure a smooth project implementation, timely and within planned resources;
- Well defined roles and responsibilities at the level of the project team.
- Regular project monitoring and follow-up mechanism;
- Adequate and realistic budget.

E. Effectiveness is the extent to which the programme/project output and outcome results were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

Indicators for Effectiveness:

- Clarity, logic and realistic cause-effect relationship of project design elements (activities, outputs, outcome, overall objective);
- Adequate identification and clear formulation of the project outcome in terms of change or improvement in conditions, services, and situations, to be obtained due to the completion of the project outputs and their use.
- SMART performance indicators (including baseline and target) at output and outcome level to facilitate monitoring of progress and of results achieved (during and after implementation).
- Proper identification of risks and assumptions, at least at output and outcome levels, and risk mitigation strategies.