



NATIONAL ECOSYSTEM PLANNING CENTER OF EXPERTISE

REVIEW GUIDE FOR PEER REVIEW PLANS

[DISTRICT ABBRV] – [PROJECT NAME]

District POC: [NAME] / PCX POC: [NAME]

REQUIREMENT	REFERENCE	PCX EVALUATION
1. Does the plan include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Title b. Subject c. Purpose of decision document d. Product Delivery Team members names* e. Planning Center of Expertise points of contact* 	EC 1105-2-408 Para 6.a <i>*NOTE: Names should be removed prior to posting to website per Supplemental Information for the "Peer Review Process" memo dated March 2007 under Review Plan Posting heading</i>	a. YES / NO b. YES / NO c. YES / NO d. YES / NO e. YES / NO Comments:
2. What level of review is the responsible District recommending? Independent Technical Review (ITR) only OR ITR and External Peer Review (EPR)	EC 1105-2-408 Para 6.b	
3. Does the plan address if report will disseminate influential scientific information or high influential scientific assessment?	EC 1105-2-408 Para 6.b	YES / NO Comments:

4. Does the plan present a general schedule that shows the timing of the reviews?	EC 1105-2-408 Para 6.c	YES / NO Comments:
5. Is information provided on how External Peer Review (EPR) (if any) will be conducted (panel, individual letters or alternative procedure)?	EC 1105-2-408 Para 6.d	YES / NO / NA Comments:
6. Does the plan provide information regarding: a. How will the public have opportunities to comment on the report to be peer reviewed? b. When will the public have opportunities to make comments? c. Will any significant or relevant public comments be provided to the reviewers before review is conducted?	EC 1105-2-408 Paras 6.e and f	a. YES / NO b. YES / NO c. YES / NO Comments:
7. Does the plan present a. The anticipated number of reviewers for the ITR team? b. A succinct description of the primary disciplines or	Items a,b,d,e :EC 1105-2-408 Paras 6.g and h Item c: Ecosystem Planning Center	a. YES / NO b. YES / NO c. YES / NO d. YES / NO / NA

<p>expertise needed for the ITR team</p> <p>c. A recommendation that the ITR team leader is outside of MSC</p> <p>d. The anticipated number of reviewers needed for the EPR (if any)</p> <p>e. A succinct description of the primary disciplines or expertise needed for the EPR team?</p>	<p>of Expertise requirement to ensure transparency.</p>	<p>e. YES / NO / NA</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>8. a. Are ITR reviewers recommended by name?</p> <p>b. If not, does the plan recommend a strategy for nominating reviewers such as a lead District, PCX nomination of entire team, etc?</p>	<p><i>*NOTE: Names should be removed prior to posting to website per Supplemental Information for the "Peer Review Process" memo dated March 2007 under Review Plan Posting heading</i></p>	<p>a. YES / NO</p> <p>b. YES / NO</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>9. Does the plan address:</p> <p>a. How the EPR team members will be selected (by the Corps or designated outside organization)?</p> <p>b. If the public (including scientific and professional societies) will be</p>	<p>EC 1105-2-408 Para s 6.i and j</p>	<p>a. YES / NO / NA</p> <p>b. YES / NO / NA</p> <p>Comments:</p>

asked to nominate potential peer reviewers?		
10. Does the plan address whether there is vertical team consensus on the level of review the District is recommending? If no, the District should engage the vertical team prior to PCX approval of the plan.	EC 1105-2-408 Para 9.a	YES / NO Comments:
11. ITR of all decision documents must be conducted using DrChecks. Does the plan address this requirement?	EC 1105-2-408 Para 5.c	YES / NO Comments:
12. If the project is multipurpose, a. Has a lead planning center of expertise designated by the Planning Advisory Board? b. Has the lead PCX coordinated with other PCX and offices to ensure that a review team with appropriate expertise is assembled?	EC 1105-2-408 Para 7.c	a. YES / NO / NA b. YES / NO / NA Comments:
13. Is enough detail presented to assess the necessary level and focus of peer review? <i>Items to look for:</i>	Supplemental Information for the "Peer Review Process" memo dated March 2007 under	YES / NO Comments:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Novel methods</i> • <i>Controversy</i> • <i>Significant agency interest</i> • <i>Significant econ, enviro, or social effect</i> • <i>Complex challenges</i> • <i>Precedent setting methods/models</i> • <i>Conclusions will change practices or affect policy</i> • <i>Project magnitude</i> • <i>Project risk</i> 	<p>Review Plan Content heading</p> <p>EC 1105-2-408 Paras 4.b and 9.a</p>	
<p>14. Is plan a separate document that can be posted to the web (so the public may review and understand it)?</p>	<p>Supplemental Information for the "Peer Review Process" memo dated March 2007 under Review Plan Content heading</p>	<p>YES / NO</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>15. Review plans should address model certification needs as outlined in EC 1105-2-407. Does the plan address model certification needs*?</p> <p><i>*Model certification does not need to be accomplished at the time the plan is submitted. If the study is early in the process, there should be discussion of what models are likely to be used and if the models will need certification.</i></p>	<p>Supplemental Information for the "Peer Review Process" memo dated March 2007 under Review Plan Content heading</p>	<p>YES / NO</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>16. Implementation costs alone can trigger EPR. The current trigger amount is \$50M.</p> <p>a. Does the plan address</p>	<p>Supplemental Information for the "Peer Review Process" memo dated March 2007 under External Peer</p>	<p>a. YES / NO</p> <p>b. YES / NO</p> <p>Comments:</p>

<p>implementation costs sufficiently enough to make this determination? b. Are the costs over this target?</p>	<p>Review Considerations heading</p>	
<p>17. Does the plan address coordination with the NWW Cost Estimating Directory of Expertise for the review of the cost estimate?</p>	<p>Email dtd 3/09/07 from Harry Kitch on behalf of Mr. Waters.</p>	<p>YES / NO Comments:</p>

GENERAL/EDITORIAL COMMENTS:



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

30 MAR 2007

CECW-CP

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Peer Review Process

1. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers independent technical review (ITR) and peer review processes are essential to improving project safety and quality of the products we provide to the American people. We have an effective ITR process for planning and engineering products that must be strengthened. The 2002 report on "Review Procedures for Water Resources Project Planning" from the National Research Council and the recent Interagency Performance Evaluation Taskforce (IPET) report clearly show the importance of external peer review in improving our plans, projects and programs.

2. We implemented a more comprehensive peer review process in May of 2005 when we published EC 1105-2-408 "Peer Review of Decision Documents" that established a thoughtful, balanced peer review process. This EC adopted most of the NRC recommendations and implemented the OMB guidelines on peer review. It requires that peer review approaches be customized for each effort. Depending on the particular circumstances, reviews may be conducted entirely within the Corps, entirely by external panels, or in various combinations. I held a VTC in August 2005 with all the MSCs to emphasize the importance of this guidance. The basic components and requirements of the EC are:

- Applies to all studies & reports needing authorization
- Strengthens Independent Technical Review (ITR)
- Establishes External Peer Review (EPR) in cases of high risk, complexity, or precedent-setting approaches
- Assigns management of ITR and EPR to the Planning Centers of Expertise
- ITR and EPR are cost shared
- Review Plans must be published and available for public comment (http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/cecw-cp/peer/peer_rev.html)
- Review and response must be completed prior to Civil Works Review Board presentation

3. Effective immediately, these additional requirements will further strengthen our peer review processes. First, consistent with the guidance issued by memorandum on 8 November 2006 (Support to Planning Centers of Expertise), the applicability of

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SUBJECT: Peer Review Process

EC 1105-2-408 is extended to all studies and reports needing authorization, regardless of the date the FCSA was signed, except for only those cases where the submittal of the final feasibility report package (per EC 1105-2-405) has already been forwarded to HQ as of this date.

4. Commanders need to be actively involved in establishing robust peer review approaches for all of your products. Review Plans must anticipate and define the appropriate level of review from the very start of the effort. In developing Review Plans, you are responsible for closely coordinating with the Planning Centers of Expertise and for seeking and incorporating comments from the public. This engagement will ensure that the peer review approach is responsive to our wide array of stakeholders and customers, both within and outside the Federal Government.

5. I ask that you specifically review your decisions on the level of peer review and consider when external peer review may be appropriate. To date, the number of instances where external peer review has been recommended has fallen short of expectations. We need to routinely incorporate independent expertise into our processes to assure we are providing the best possible service to the Nation. External peer review will continue to be required per EC 1105-2-408 and the Office of Management and Budget's "Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review" (Dec. 2004) in cases where information is based on novel methods, presents complex challenges for interpretation, contains precedent-setting methods or models, presents conclusions that are likely to change prevailing practices, addresses important public safety risks or is likely to affect policy decisions that have a significant impact. External peer review panels will accomplish a concurrent review that covers the entire decision document. The panel will address all the underlying engineering, economics, and environmental work, not just one aspect of the project.

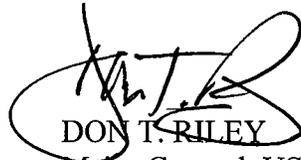
6. We will report on and measure the requirement that review plans in the Project Management Plans be complete, comprehensive and current. MSCs will review decisions on the level of peer review for all cases and determine where external peer review may be appropriate. In coordination with the Planning Centers of Expertise, Districts will publish the review plans and engage public comment as required by the Information Quality Act and current guidance. We will maintain and distribute a list of all review plans posted compared against a list of all active studies for discussion at monthly PRB's, quarterly DMR's and CMR's. MSCs will also track and report the number of EPR's underway and the number of EPR's completed through P2.

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SUBJECT: Peer Review Process

7. Finally, for studies with a FCSA signed after 31 May 2005, Districts will post review plans and get MSC approval within thirty days of this memorandum. MSCs will report the results at the next CMR. Starting with FY 08, Districts must post review plans and get MSC approval prior to allocation of funds.

8. It is vitally important that we employ a dynamic independent review process in fulfilling our responsibility to provide the Nation with sound water resources solutions. We are continuing to improve our peer review guidance and processes. Planning and Engineering are currently developing seamless guidance for peer review of all Civil Works projects from initial planning through design, construction, turnover to sponsors and O&MRR&R. The requirements with this memorandum will also be incorporated and further elaborated in Corps guidance. The Corps will adopt and continue to strengthen a more open and vigorous peer review process.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



DON T. RILEY
Major General, USA
Director of Civil Works

DISTRIBUTION LIST:

COMMANDERS:
Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, CELRD
Mississippi Valley Division, CEMVD
North Atlantic Division, CENAD
Northwestern Division, CENWD
Pacific Ocean Division, CEPOD
South Atlantic Division, CESAD
South Pacific Division, CESP
Southwestern Division, CESWD

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION FOR THE “PEER REVIEW PROCESS”
MEMO, DATED MARCH 2007

APPLICABILITY

- Review Plans are required for all authorized studies that have a signed FCSA, regardless of date
- Review must be coordinated by the appropriate PCX for all applicable studies
- For multi-purpose studies, Districts should contact all appropriate PCXs and develop a recommendation for which PCX should lead the Peer Review process
 - In general, a PCX different than the originating MSC is preferable from the standpoint of independence
 - If there is disagreement among the district and the PCXs over a district’s recommendation about which Center should lead a given Review, the issue should be brought to the attention the district’s MSC for resolution
- The HQ point of contact for Peer Review oversight is CECW-CP

REVIEW PLAN POSTING

- Peer Review plans will be posted on the originating District’s public website
 - Most Districts have a separate website for each study/project – this seems ideal, but is not required at this time. Each plan must be posted on a District’s public site, and easy to find
- PCX and HQ postings will link to the District’s site
- Per DOD security regulations, the posted documents will NOT include names of Corps (or Department of Defense) employees.
 - Descriptors, such as “project manager” or “PCX manager” can work instead of names
 - Emails contacts can be displayed by using generic accounts created using descriptors such as those above (and can be used without identifying the individual, for example – “press here to email study manager,” etc.)
 - Phone numbers can be listed, employees can answer with their name – the point is to avoid potential online gathering of names by enemies of the US
- In contrast to the restriction on posting names of DOD employees, the names of External Reviewers MUST be reported, per OMB guidance, to support credibility and transparency in the external peer review process.
 - The names of external reviewers will likely not be established when the Review Plan is developed, but can be added to the Review Plan as they are known; they must also be reported in the EPR documentation
- Review Plans must be posted for public comment, but public comment does not need to be actively solicited. Per OMB guidance, there are no fixed requirements for acknowledging and responding to the public comment (in contrast to NEPA,

for example). Nonetheless, active participation by stakeholders at all stages of the study is beneficial and approaches should be considered by the PDTs.

REVIEW PLAN CONTENT

- To meet the requirements of both the OMB Final Bulletin on Peer Review and the Corps' QA/QC and PMPs processes it is recommended that each Review Plan be prepared as a separate appendix (QC and Peer Review) to the PMP
- The basic format for a Review Plan is specified in EC 1105-2-408; it must address the full scope of the review, including specification of the ITR and EPR if applicable
- Review Plans must be tailored to meet the specific circumstances of each study – this is not a boilerplate exercise.
 - The scope must be sufficient and appropriate to the level of study.
 - Review Plans should be detailed enough to assess the necessary level and focus of peer review – which parts of the study will likely be challenging, which models and data are proposed, etc.
 - Review Plans should address model certification needs per EC 1105-2-407

REVIEW PLAN APPROVAL

- Review Plans are developed and jointly agreed upon by the originating District and the appropriate PCX
- Approval of the Review Plan is the responsibility of the MSC that oversees the originating District
 - If there is disagreement over the scope, content or other aspects of the Review Plan, the MSC should coordinate resolution between the District and the PCX
- HQ will sample Review Plans for QA/QC on content and approval, and use of EPR

REVIEW PLAN UPDATES

- Like any aspect of a PMP, the Review Plan is a living document and may change as the study progresses. Changes to a Review Plan should be approved by following the process used for initially approving a Review Plan.
- In all cases the MSCs will review the decision on the level of peer review, and any changes made in updates

EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS

- External Peer Review refers to review conducted outside of the Corps of Engineers
- External Peer Review will cover the entire decision document, addressing the underlying engineering, economics and environmental work, not just one aspect

of the study. Certain aspects of the review may warrant special emphasis, for example a novel economics technique or a complex hydraulic routing.

- The decision to conduct an EPR is made by the vertical team including the PCX.
- Given the current climate, expensive studies are going to warrant EPR even if they don't trigger the other criteria. There is no fixed trigger amount at this time, but big studies will have EPR.
- The National Academies of Science is frequently cited for the type of EPR process the Corps should follow, however NAS reviews are expected to be rare
 - Decisions to approach NAS must be made by HQ
- Procedures for securing EPR services from Battelle are currently being developed by IWR

A number of existing contracting vehicles have been utilized by PCXs to date (existing IDIQ contracts, etc). Additional EPR contracting vehicles are being developed by IWR.

TRACKING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- Peer Review metrics will be monitored along with the broader array of PCX metrics to be reported at DMR/CMR, etc., to include the total number of studies that should have Review Plans; the number of Review Plans posted; and the number of EPRs underway and the number of EPRs completed.
- P2 applications in support of Peer Review management and reporting need to be explored and developed – several offices have taken initiatives in this area
- CECI-A is required to report on Information Quality Act compliance for USACE, which includes some aspects of peer review. CECW-P will assist in fulfilling these requirements.
<http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/CECI/InformationQualityAct/index.htm>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS / TALKING POINTS

Q) Why is the Corps doing this?

A) The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers independent technical review (ITR) and peer review processes are essential to improving project safety and quality of the products we provide to the American people. The 2002 report on “Review Procedures for Water Resources Project Planning” from the National Research Council and the recent Interagency Performance Evaluation Taskforce (IPET) report clearly show the importance of external peer review in improving our plans, projects and programs. The Corps will adopt and continue to strengthen a more open and vigorous peer review process.

Q) My study has been underway for some time, and we don't have the time or funds left to meet these new requirements. How do we get an exemption from the requirement for external peer review?

A) There are several parts to this question. First, this guidance does not require external peer review, but it does require that a Review Plan be developed as part of the study's QA/QC plan in the PMP to scope out the appropriate peer review approach. Scoping a Review Plan involves a dialogue between the District, its MSC, the appropriate Planning Center of Expertise, and stakeholders who can make public comment on the proposed Review Plan. There is no process for exemption from the requirement. The Director of Civil Works is committed to a high level and quality of review on all of our products. Time and funding constraints are not an excuse for seeking to avoid this responsibility.

Q) Our PMP already has a QA/QC plan. What is the point of having a separately described Review Plan?

A) The Review Plans have been established to meet the needs of Corps regulations for PMPs as well as OMB requirements for Peer Review. EC 1105-2-408 lists the topics that must be addressed in a Review Plan. The Review Plan serves as the basis for a scope of work between the District and the Planning Center of Expertise that will be conducting the review. The Review Plan is customized to fit the needs of each study, and must be detailed enough to identify the aspects of the study that may or may not trigger an external peer review. The Review Plans must engage the many stakeholders interested in the study (local sponsor, vertical chain, PCX, general public) to ensure that the peer review approach is responsive to our wide array of stakeholders and customers, both within and outside the Federal Government.

Q) Who decides the appropriate scope and approach to Peer Review?

A) The approach to Peer Review, documented in the Review Plan, is a negotiated approach involving the many stakeholders of the study (see answer above). It is possible that there will be differing opinions or disputes over the appropriate approach to peer review, including whether or not to conduct an external peer review. The MSC that oversees the District leading the study is responsible for the final decision on the scope of the Peer Review. MSCs are mindful of the importance that the Director of Civil Works places on the value of external reviews.

Q) What does a good Review Plan look like? Where can I find examples?

A) A good review plan will meet all of the requirements of PMP regulations and EC 1105-2-408, whereby it will specify the scope and important details to be covered in the review. Ideally, a Review Plan will be a separate appendix to the PMP, supplementing the QA/QC section of the PMP. As a self-standing appendix, it is more accessible for public comment required under OMB guidance, and possibly easier to update as the study progresses.

There is no template for Review Plans, but existing Review Plans are posted on the Planning CoP website. As we gain more experience with developing Review Plans it is expected that more good examples will emerge, and made available through the PCXs or the Planning CoP:

http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/cecw-cp/peer/rev_plans.html

What are the requirements for responding to public comments on a Peer Review plan?

Q) What if we disagree with comments from an external review panel?

A) The Corps is not required to agree with all items from a peer review panel, but must consider and address the response and action for each comment. The OMB Final Bulletin on Peer Review addresses this issue. “Accordingly, agencies should consider preparing a written response to the peer review report explaining: The agency’s agreement or disagreement, the actions the agency has undertaken or will undertake in response to the report, and (if applicable) the reasons the agency believes those actions satisfy any key concerns or recommendations in the report.”

Q) The Engineering Chief in my district is uncomfortable with the idea that the quality of his staff’s work will be left up to Planners outside our district. How can the assurance of quality be left up to a Planning Center of Expertise?

A) First, the quality of engineering components in a planning study is still the responsibility of the Engineering Chief in the home district. Peer Review does not eliminate the need for quality control within the PDT. Second, the technical reviews led by the Planning Centers of Expertise are conducted by senior specialists in all of the disciplines appropriate to the review. So, engineering work in an ITR would be reviewed by senior engineers from a different part of the country, not by “planners” per se. The important part of ITR and EPR is getting fresh and qualified perspectives from senior professionals who were not involved in doing the original work.

Q) The National Academy of Science is frequently cited as the “gold standard” for doing independent reviews. How can I get them to do peer review for my study quickly and on my limited budget?

A) The National Academies of Science is frequently cited for the type of EPR process the Corps should follow, however NAS reviews are expected to be rare. The NAS has conducted external reviews and assessments for the Corps on the Upper Mississippi River System, the Everglades, and the Louisiana Coastal studies; these reviews typically take place over several years and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars each. Decisions to approach NAS must be made by HQ and will be coordinated on a case by case basis.

From: Kitch, Harry E HQ02
Sent: Friday, March 09, 2007 2:11 PM

Subject: Planning Centers of Expertise - Cost Estimating

On behalf of Mr. Waters.

Harry E. Kitch, P.E.
Deputy, Planning Community of Practice
Leader, Flood Damage Reduction Business Line Directorate of Civil Works

At a 30 January 07 briefing to Mr. John Paul Woodley, ASA(CW) on cost engineering improvement strategies, HQUSACE committed to a list of specific short and long term initiatives to improve our cost estimating in decision documents. Central to the improvements is updating cost engineering guidance and developing integrated planning and engineering policy.

Included in the improvement initiatives was a requirement that the Planning Centers of Expertise would begin using the Cost Engineering Center at Walla Walla District for peer reviews of cost estimates by June 2007. At a quarterly teleconference in early February with the Planning Centers of Expertise, I directed them to begin now to coordinate with the Cost Engineering Center, even while specific guidance and operating procedures are being developed. Accordingly, for independent technical reviews, the Cost Engineering Center should conduct or coordinate the review of any cost estimates. Further guidance will be forthcoming.

Mr. Ray Lynn, Chief of Cost Engineering at HQs, has established a PDT to further identify implementation of the initiatives to include development of consistent guidance for preparing estimates at the feasibility level and the development of estimate contingencies using a standard cost risk analysis program.

Tom
THOMAS W. WATERS, PE
Chief, Planning/Policy
Chief, MVD RIT