



# Project Management for Development Organizations

Doing the right Projects, Doing the Project Right

## The Project Quality

Quality has been defined as "the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs."<sup>1</sup> The stated and implied quality needs are the inputs used in defining project requirements from the donor and the beneficiaries. It is also defined as the "Conformance to requirements or fitness for use"<sup>2</sup>; which means that the product or services must meet the intended objectives of the project and have a value to the donor and beneficiaries and that the beneficiaries can use the material or service as it was originally intended. The central focus of quality management is meeting or exceeding stakeholder's expectations and conforming to the project design and specifications.

The ultimate judge for quality is the beneficiary, and represents how close the project outputs and deliverables come to meeting the beneficiaries' requirements and expectations. How a beneficiary defines quality may be completely subjective, but there are many ways to make quality objective; by defining the individual characteristics and determine one or more metrics that can be collected to mirror the characteristic. For instance, one of the features of a quality product may be that it has a minimum amount of errors. This characteristic can be measured by counting errors and defects after the product is used.

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<sup>1</sup> International Organization for Standardization (ISO), Quality Management and Quality Assurance (Geneva, Switzerland: ISO Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph M. Duran , Quality Control Handbook (1951)

## Management of Quality

The main principle of project quality management is to ensure the project will meet or exceed the stakeholder's needs and expectations. The project team must develop a good relationship with key stakeholders, specially the donor and the beneficiaries of the project, to understand what quality means to them.

Quality must be viewed in an equal level with scope, schedule and budget. If a project donor is not satisfied with the quality of how the project is delivering the outcomes, the project team will need to make adjustments to scope, schedule and budget to satisfy the donor's needs and expectations. To deliver the project scope on time and on budget is not enough, to achieve stakeholder satisfaction the project must develop a good working relationship with all stakeholders and understand their stated or implied needs.

*Quality management is not an event - it is a process, a consistently high quality product or service cannot be produced by a defective process.*

*Quality management is a repetitive cycle of measuring quality, updating processes, measuring, updating processes until the desired quality is achieved.*

Quality management is the process for ensuring that all project activities necessary to design, plan and implement a project are effective and efficient with respect to the purpose of the objective and its performance.

Project quality management (QM) is not a separate, independent process that occurs at the end of an activity to measure the level of quality of the output. It is not purchasing the most expensive material or services available on the market. Quality and grade are not the same, grade is a characteristic of a material or service such as additional features. A product may be of good quality (no defects) and be of low grade (few or no extra features).

Quality management is a continuous process that starts and ends with the project. It is more about preventing and avoiding than measuring and fixing poor quality outputs. It is part of every project management process from the moment the project initiates to the final steps in the project closure phase.

QM focuses on improving stakeholder satisfaction through continuous and incremental improvements to processes, including removing unnecessary activities; it achieves that by the continuous improvement of the quality of material and services provided to the beneficiaries. It is not about finding and fixing errors after the fact, quality management is

the continuous monitoring and application of quality processes in all aspects of the project.

### **Quality Assurance**

Quality Assurance is a process to provide confirmation based on evidence to ensure to the donor, beneficiaries, organization management and other stakeholders that product meet needs, expectations, and other requirements. It assures the existence and effectiveness of processes and procedures tools, and safeguards are in place to make sure that the expected levels of quality will be reached to produce quality outputs.

Assurance is the activity of providing evidence to create confidence among all stakeholders that the quality-related activities are being performed effectively; and that all planned actions are being made to provide adequate confidence that a product or service will satisfy the stated requirements for quality.

Quality assurance occurs during the implementation phase of the project and includes the evaluation of the overall performance of the project on a regular basis to provide confidence that the project will satisfy the quality standards defined by the project.

One of the purposes of quality management is to find errors and defects as early in the project as possible. Therefore, a good quality management process will end up taking more effort hours and costs up-front. The goal is to reduce the chances that products or services will be of poor quality after the project has been completed.

### **Quality Control**

Quality control is the use of techniques and activities that compare actual quality performance with goals and define appropriate actions in response to a shortfall. It is the process that monitors specific project results to determine if they comply with relevant standards and identifies different approaches to eliminate the causes for the unsatisfactory performance.

The goal of quality control is to improve the quality and involves monitoring the project outputs to determine if they meet the quality standards or definitions based on the project stakeholder's expectations. Quality control also includes how the project performs in its efforts to manage scope, budget and schedule.

## **Quality Improvement**

It is the systematic approach to the processes of work that looks to remove waste, loss, rework, frustration, etc., in order to make the processes of work more effective, efficient, and appropriate. Quality improvement refers to the application of methods and tools to close the gap between current and expected levels of quality by understanding and addressing system deficiencies and strengths to improve, or in some cases, re-design project processes. A variety of quality improvement approaches exists, ranging from individual performance improvement to redesign of entire project processes.

## **Project Quality Plan**

The Project Quality Plan can be defined as a set of activities planned at the beginning of the project that helps achieve Quality of the Project being executed. The Purpose of the Project Quality Plan is to define the activities that intend to deliver project outcomes while focusing on achieving stakeholder's quality expectations. These activities are defined on the basis of the quality standards set by the organization delivering the project outcomes.

Project Quality Plan identifies which Quality Standards are relevant to the project and determines how they can be satisfied. It includes the implementation of Quality Controls (audits, evaluations, reviews) by using the various Quality tool (templates, standards, checklists) available within the organization. As an output of the various activities, Quality Metrics or Measurements are captured which assist in continuous improvement of Quality thus adding to the inventory of Lessons Learned. Quality Assurance deals in preparation of the Quality Plan and formation of organization wide standards.

## **Evaluating the Project Quality Plan**

The Project Quality plan must be sufficient to achieve the required quality standards expected of the organization. The plan must not only be specific and detailed listing all quality requirements and standards, but also include all the steps taken to ensure that those requirements and standards are met. Quality assurance should be independent of the project itself (as well as the project manager). This comes down from the project management guidelines for effective quality assurance, and builds on a broad-based, organizational approaches to standards-based product testing.

The development of a Project Quality Plan is a team process that depends as much on communicating information as it does on planning. The key objective is to create a cohesive dialog and subsequently develop an awareness of potential quality issues assurance. Based on this awareness, project managers can prepare plans and actions to counter any weaknesses or deficiencies in the project execution, thus ensuring that all quality standards are met effectively.

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These series of articles focuses on concepts and practices related to development projects. It is our hope that the ideas and methodologies presented here prove useful to anyone who is engaged in managing projects in the broader development community, and helps bring sustainable benefits to the communities and beneficiaries who need it the most.

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