Aligning Expectations

DQC and ATR - What You Should Know

2015 National Planning Community of Practice Training
2 June 2015
Handouts

Review Timeline (check out larger version in poster area)

DQC Road Map

DISTRICT QUALITY CONTROL (DQC) BEST PRACTICES: A Map to Excellence!
Presentation Format

- District Quality Control
  - Guidance
  - Best practices

- Agency Technical Review
  - Review guidance and tools
  - Overview of the review process
  - Discuss lessons learned for successful reviews
District Quality Control (DQC)
Introduction

- DQC best discussed as
  - What is required in guidance
  - What are best practices
    - Those taken from ATR
    - Others from experience
Introduction

- DQC defined in guidance as
  “...an internal review process of basic science and engineering work products focused on fulfilling the project quality requirements defined in the Project Management Plan (PMP).”
- Backbone of the Corps’ quality process
DQC Guidance

- From EC 1165-2-214
  - All work products must undergo DQC
  - Home District shall manage
  - Conducted IAW QMPs
  - Documentation is required
  - Covers NEPA documents and in kind services products
DQC Guidance

- From EC 1165-2-214
  - Reliance on other reviews not substitute
  - Quality checks as part of routine management practices
  - Must be independent
DQC Guidance

- From EC 1165-2-214
  - PDT reviews should be performed
    - Ensure consistency
    - Effective coordination across disciplines
  - PDT responsible for complete reading of all products
    - But not a replacement for DQC
DQC Guidance

- Efforts will include necessary expertise
- Policy concerns should be elevated to MSC or HQUSACE
- MSC/District QMP will prescribe specific procedures
- ATR team will examine records
DQC Best Practices

- DQC Lessons Learned
  - Review Report
  - Use of 4 Part Comment Structure
  - Use of DrChecks
  - Lead Designation
  - Scoping of Efforts
DQC Best Practice

Why use a DQC Review Report

- Provide a summary of critical comments
- Document critical internal discussions
- Document unresolved comments and the risk
- Repository of comments
- Helps comply with policy

- Orient the ATR team
- Save time on subsequent reviews
- Provide a sound bite for senior leaders prior to endorsement
- Bring forward items to incorporate in later steps

Documentation Tool

Communication Tool
DQC Best Practice

Suggested Review Report Components

- Introduction
- Summary
- Signature
- Comments

DQC REVIEW REPORT
DQC Best Practice

1. Clear statement of the concern

2. Basis for the concern

3. The significance of the concern

4. Recommended actions to resolve the concern
DQC Best Practice

- Use of DrChecks
  - Familiar to District employees
  - Easy documentation & archiving
  - Formal tracking system
DQC Best Practice

- Designate a DQC lead
- Responsibilities could include:
  - Prepare DQC documentation
  - Ensure consistency
  - Collect editorial comments
  - Ensure reviewer qualifications
DQC Best Practice

- **Scoping of DQC Efforts**
  - Include funding and schedule in RP and PMP
  - Outline team qualifications
    - Should mirror PDT and ATR team
DQC Best Practice

- DQC Work Plan
  - Hold kick-off meeting
  - Use 4 part comment structure
  - Limit comments to those that improve quality
  - Avoid personal opinion
  - Provide editorial comments separately
  - Ensure understanding of product purpose
DQC Best Practice

- PDT Effective Habits
  - Hold a “page turn” review
  - Use a technical writer/editor
  - Ask for interim reviews
    - Over the shoulder by supervisor
    - Ad hoc
    - Be sure to document
Presentation Format

- Review guidance and tools
- Overview of the review process
- Discuss lessons learned for successful reviews
What is ATR?

- Agency Technical Review (ATR) is a review undertaken to "ensure the quality and credibility of the government's scientific information"
- **Required by EC 1165-2-214**
- ATR is mandatory for all decision and implementation documents
- ATR Team (ATRT) also reviews DQC documentation
When to do ATR?

- ATR changed under SMART Planning
  - Continual process with a formal review after the TSP and before CWRB milestones
  - Key work products reviewed as completed
  - Formal ATR concurrent with Policy and Public Review (and IEPR if required)
Who Does ATR?

- A team of individuals:
  - Not involved with project
  - Senior-level competence
  - Experienced and knowledgeable
  - Outside home district
  - ATR Lead outside MSC (GI studies)
Who Does ATR

- Generally mirrors PDT (specified in RP)
- Those who are ATR Certified
  - See FRM-PCX SharePoint for ATR Rosters
  - ED, RE, Econ, and Cultural posted
  - Plan Form, Environmental Compliance and ER Planning coming soon
Beginning of ATR

- RMO oversees ATR & forms ATRT
  - PCX for GI studies; MSC for CAP
  - RMO coordinates with Cost MCX to ID a cost reviewer
- An ATR Lead is assigned
- ATR Charge is developed
  - The directive for performing the ATR
  - ATR should be commensurate with scope and funding provided
ATR Overview

- Review tools
  - Planning CoP Website
    - [http://planning.usace.army.mil](http://planning.usace.army.mil)
  - SMART Planning Guide
  - EC 1165-2-214 Civil Works Review
  - ER 1105-2-100 Appendices G and H
ATR Overview

- Each ATRT member shall:
  - Review his/her discipline elements
  - Review project consistency across disciplines
  - Provide comments in DrChecks
How to “Do” an ATR

- ATR Phases
  - Review/Comment
  - Evaluation
    - PDT Evaluates ATR Comment
    - ATRT Evaluates PDT Response to comment
  - Comment resolution
  - Close Comment
Review/Comment

- The ATRT shall:
  - Not dictate matters based solely on personal preferences
  - Limit comments to those required to ensure adequacy
  - Provide editorial and informal comments off-line
Offline Comments

- These should be made off-line!
  - Spelling, grammar, format or language
  - Repetitive comments on the same subject
  - Issues that will not contribute to the project
  - Minor numerical errors that do not affect validity
Review/Comment

- ATR comments should follow the four part comment structure

1. Clear statement of the concern
2. Basis for the concern
3. The significance of the concern
4. Recommended actions to resolve the concern
The Evaluation

- PDT members evaluate the comments and provide responses
  - Check and resolve
  - Concur
  - Non-concur
  - For information only
The Evaluation

- If there is disagreement or uncertainty with a comment:
  - Ask for clarification if needed via phone or email
  - Call reviewer/PDT member if you cannot concur
The Resolution

- ATRT members “back check” responses
  - Review response
  - Review revised document if revisions not provided in DrChecks response
- Close comment if satisfied
- Keep comment open and initiate resolution, but avoid tug of war
The Resolution

- ATRT does not have authority to cause resolution of comments
- Recommend vertical team coordination
- Follow issue resolution process
  - EC 1165-2-214 App C
- Comments become part of official record
ATR Conclusion

- All resolved comments closed in DrChecks
- Any remaining comments elevated for resolution
- ATR Report is prepared
- Appropriate forms are signed for ATR Completion and ATR Certification
ATR Costs

- Highly variable and depends on:
  - size and complexity of study
  - number of reviewers
  - condition of the report
- Can range $3K - $10K per reviewer
- Additional $3K - $10K for ATR Lead
- PCX costs may apply, depending upon business line
Lessons Learned for Successful ATR

- The following is for both ATRT and PDT
  - Vertical team alignment makes review easier; have level of detail discussion early
  - Stay on schedule and within budget
  - Communicate; be available
  - Follow the ATR Charge
Additional Take Away Points

- Early coordination of review needs with PCX is essential
- Poorly built comments are hard to resolve
- Remember to cite references, not personal opinion
- Remember that ATR documentation accompanies report through approval
- The ATRT is comprised of volunteers
Discussion