

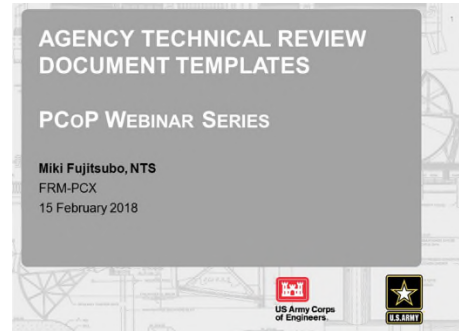
**ATR Document Templates  
Planning CoP Webinar  
February 15, 2018  
Q&A Session**

*During the 15 February 2018 PCoP webinar, Mr. Miki Fujitsubo of the Flood Risk Management Planning Center of Expertise shared information on Agency Technical Review (ATR), which is a key component of ensuring the technical and policy quality of our products. The presentation included an overview of the types of ATR, roles and responsibilities, and how to document the review. Mr. Fujitsubo also shared some new templates/examples for documenting ATR – the ATR Work Plan and ATR Summary Report.*

*In addition, Mr. Fujitsubo discussed the important role of the ATR lead. Both of the templates discussed during the presentation are available on the Planning Community Toolbox on the Templates and Checklists page under the Tools tab:*

*<https://planning.erd.c.dren.mil/toolbox/tools.cfm?id=137&Option=Templates%20and%20Checklists>.*

*Additional ATR and other review tools are available for planners on the Planning Community Toolbox in the Processes tab, under Review: <https://planning.erd.c.dren.mil/toolbox/processes.cfm>*



*This summary of the Question / Answer session of the webinar is not a transcription; questions and responses have been edited and reordered for clarity.*

***Gaining Experience in ATR***

**Is there a method in place to gain technical review (ATR) experience without being ATR certified?**

Susan Durden: I would offer as an example that in the Econ sub-CoP, we have set up some processes so that new staff, and particularly our DA (Department of the Army) interns, can work in conjunction with the senior ATR reviewer and document it so that it can be counted as ATR experience. This is a way to do some teaming so that folks get relevant experience, particularly in areas where we are low on ATR reviewers.

Jodi Creswell: In the Environmental sub-CoP, they were identifying folks eligible and ready for mentoring, so that people with the skills and knowledge to conduct the work but who hadn't yet done a technical review on their own could be paired with a certified reviewer, and be able to check in with that person on their comments and receive some coaching and guidance.

Maria Wegner: In the Plan Formulation sub-CoP, in the certification process we recognize the value of DQC, so we give credit for that and encourage you to start at the District level doing review. We are looking at additional ways to better capture some mentoring and other growth and development opportunities so that when people come on board and start doing ATR, they're not just technically competent but are more familiar with some of the expectations of the four-part comment structure. I think every year we're getting better, and if you're struggling to get certified, talk to your supervisor and the MSC-level person working in the process.

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Camie Knollenberg (via chat): CAP does not require ATR certification for its ATR reviewers, so that is a good program in which to get experience. DQC is also a good way to get review experience, if your supervisor feels that you are ready.

Kathy Skalbeck (via chat): Those with lots of experience can serve as mentors during an ATR; the newer person performs the review with the mentor also doing the review and comparing their comments. The certified person places the comments into Dr. Checks and is ultimately responsible for the process.

Again, we would encourage you to let the PCXes and sub-CoPs know you're interested and available to become ATR certified. We'd encourage you to get your experience and qualification statement ready so that they can match you up. We have a template for that available too.

### **What level of experience with the Corps is recommended to be an ATR team member/reviewer?**

Dan Hughes, Nancy Brighton (via chat): For Cultural Resources it was five years in Planning and a resume review by a senior panel. Gail Celmer, who has been backfilling some of Paul R.'s responsibilities, did have an open call for certification in Cultural Resources ATR in the summer of 2017.

Jodi: For the Environmental and Planning Formulation CoPs, you fill out an application in the Planner Database and there are specific targets and ways it's scored out, and then there's consideration by the MSC leads for that sub-CoP and by the HQ sub-CoP lead as well. I believe for the Econ CoP it's a combination of submitting an application and review by a senior panel.

### ***Managing ATR as Part of the Study Process***

#### **Should Districts/studies allocate additional funding for ATR in order to develop the ATR Work Plan early in the study?**

The ATR Work Plan is part of the overall study Review Plan, which is the foundation of the ATR scope of work. The Review Plan should be up to date and part of every District's business processes. The RMOs review that and sign off on it. The ATR Work Plan is the scoping document with the schedule and funding. It also shows if it's going to be a targeted, draft, or final ATR. The type of ATR should be previously coordinated between the study team, ATR team, and the RMO so that when you go to ATR there aren't any surprises and the level of effort is understood. The funding for the ATR lead does need to come up front to start putting together the ATR team and Work Plan, so there is some work and coordination that needs to be done/funded before the start of the ATR.

#### **Is the Work Plan something new? Does this replace the Review Charge?**

Andy MacInnes (via chat): The Work Plan is an improvement upon the Review Charge. It's not new per se, just an improved version of the Charge.

Miki: The Work Plan is a "Charge plus" document. It's one way in which to clarify and get information into one place so that not only the ATR team knows the scope of work, but the PDT knows it too as they move forward to ATR. It's the next step of detail beyond the Review Plan, rather than just jumping into review.

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The Work Plan is also the vehicle for the charge questions. It's an expansion of the Charge document but brings in more of the information needed, including qualification statements, experience, and contact information. It saves a lot of time and questions and serves as a QC document and reminds the ATR team and PDT about the comment structure and overall ATR process and expectations.

### **Does the ATR team provide the charge questions?**

The ATR lead is responsible, but relies on the study team to identify areas for technical review (especially in targeted review). ATR leads may also shape charge questions based on the DQC review and issues identified through that review and through PDT contributions.

### **What is the general timeframe for how long it takes to get an ATR team together?**

It could be anywhere from a few days to a few weeks; it depends on the timing. It also takes a while to develop a list of ATR members based on the needs of the study, availability, the type of ATR, etc. With the ATR Certified Planners now in the Toolbox, it's easier.

Kathy (via chat): NOTE: One of the challenges is to find CERCAP certified engineers for various engineering specialties. ATR leads should be talking to the Engineering Chiefs in their District / Division and encouraging them to get their qualified people into CERCAP.

Andy via chat): If you are in Real Estate, please sign up for ATRs. We are always looking for technical RE reviewers!

### **How does the ATR team lead ensure that adequate, quality DQC is being performed by the District? Does the ATR lead have the ability to return the document if it is not ready for ATR review?**

The new EC 217 addresses it a little bit better now, and we're waiting for that to come out. The PCX Guild is working on guidance on how to best handle the DQC review during ATR. It's currently not very clear how the ATR team can give feedback, except at the end with the completion statement about the adequacy of DQC and the ATR certification statement.

Jodi: If you're on the ATR team and you get a document that clearly hasn't been through DQC, contact your ATR lead and that person will work with the PDT lead and PCX folks to consider whether it needs to have DQC done or done more thoroughly before it goes to ATR.

Miki: And that's why we request to have DQC documentation before the kickoff of ATR so we (ATR lead and team) can review it, but the timing of that documentation availability is challenging.

### **Who is responsible for quality assurance of ATR review team comments? For example, if a reviewer provides comments that are not in the four-part format or does not provide a thorough review, what is the feedback loop for fixing those issues?**

That should be the ATR lead – they're responsible for reviewing and filtering the comments and also for asking the reviewers to put it in the four-part structure. Again, there's a learning curve, so part of the reviews for newer certified reviewers may be educational, as provided by the ATR lead.

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**What are your thoughts on how QA of DQC differs when performed by the ATR team compared to when it's performed by the MSC? Is this largely redundant or are there different purposes/areas of emphasis?**

Andy: In my experience doing ATR work as the lead, I've never seen a separate assessment of DQC from the MSC. Usually the ATR team will get some kind of statement of DQC with multiple signatures from the District level, and if you're lucky you'll get a Dr. Checks print out.

Judy McCrea: Normally during the concurrent review, when the ATR team hasn't done its review yet, the MSC is getting the document at the same time, and we're really supposed to be focused on QA and not on policy or technical review.

Andy: I don't necessarily think it would be redundant; having some kind of assessment about the quality of the DQC ahead of time goes a long way toward making the ATR team comfortable with it and feel certain that the DQC was done and done thoroughly, which is why Dr. Checks print outs are really nice to have. But I don't think there's any redundancy with any QA role.

Judy: Unfortunately, I guess the ATR team would not benefit from the MSC's QA review. I'm just pointing it out because there's been a lot of talking about redundancy in reviews.

Jodi: What the MSCs might do as part of their QA role is look at whether the Districts are doing an adequate job of DQC. Are they documenting it appropriately? And then the PCXes could identify whether there are some recurring issues or a need to provide additional training.

**Are there differences between the ATR Report for the draft and final feasibility report? Is it the same template?**

The ATR Report is the same template, essentially.

**Would you include the ATR comments from the draft in the final report? Or do you just include the additional comments from the final review?**

If you carry over some comments from a draft or targeted ATR, usually they would be flagged for follow up in Dr. Checks. The way SMART Planning is set up, the PDT doesn't have the right timing to do the corrections or revisions in the document before they continue with the study, so they agree with the comment and say where and how the document will be revised. At that time the ATR comments should be flagged for follow up, so during the next review the PDT will verify that the comment has been addressed.

### ***Role of the Review Management Organization (RMO)***

**The Deep Draft Navigation RMO prefers to put the ATR team together, vs. the ATR lead doing so. There are unique issues depending upon the ATR's PCX, type of ATR, etc.**

That's true. When using these templates, you do need to coordinate and communicate with RMO, which may be the Planning Center of Expertise (PCX), the Risk Management Center (RMC), or in the case of Continuing Authorities Projects, the MSC. Each RMO might want to do something differently, and you need

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to adapt the templates to the study itself too. Some RMOs assemble the review team, and some would like the lead reviewer to go and search out the review team.

**Does the RMC coordinate with the FRM-PCX for Dam Safety Studies?**

Yes, we do. I can speak for the FRM PCX at least – we do contact the RMC as a courtesy if a study has a dam or levee component to it. We give them a heads up to let them know what's going on so they have the opportunity to take the lead, depending on how involved the study is with the dam safety aspect.

Karen Miller: And the other way around is true; the RMC reaches out and coordinates with the PCXes, including FRM, Inland Nav and Deep Draft. So there is coordination on both sides.

**When will EC 1165-2-217 come out?**

Bob Banks: I physically have it in my hands right now. We're updating the signature block for Mr. Dalton; he's already reviewed it, so hopefully next week it will be released.