

Working with Consultants

*From project planning
to final close-out, this is your
Guidebook and Reference
to working with
consultants effectively.*

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Keith joined Gannett Fleming in 1995 after 14 years with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He served as Deputy Secretary for Aviation, Rail, and Ports (1990-1995); Unit Manger with the Joint Legislative Budget & Finance Committee (1989-1990); Executive Policy Analyst with the Governor's Policy Office (1984-1989); Transportation Planner with PennDOT's Office of Planning (1982-1984); and as a Pennsylvania Management Intern (1981-1982).

While a PennDOT Deputy Secretary he led the PA Double-Stack Rail Clearance private-public partnership, numerous regional and shortline railroad projects, and several goods movement planning initiatives. Keith was one of two original co-chairs for the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's Goods Movement Task Force. He also had oversight for the operations of state owned air and rail facilities, including Harrisburg International Airport, Pennsylvania's third largest commercial airport. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania nominated Keith for two prestigious awards for his service and achievements—the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Young American Leaders and the AASHTO Intermodal Innovation award.

Keith's education includes bachelors and masters degrees respectively from PSU in public service (political science) and public administration (M.P.A. with distinction). He served with the United States Air Force and later with the Air National Guard. He also completed the AASHTO Executive Institute. Keith presently serves on the Boards of the Millersville University Corporate University, and the Pennsylvania Association for Nutrition and Activity (Chairman). Keith and his wife Denise live in Camp Hill and have five children from 13 to 23 years of age. Contact Keith at kchase@gfnet.com or 1 800 233 1055. (April 18, 2008)

"Working With Consultants"

Guidebook and Reference

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Subject Importance

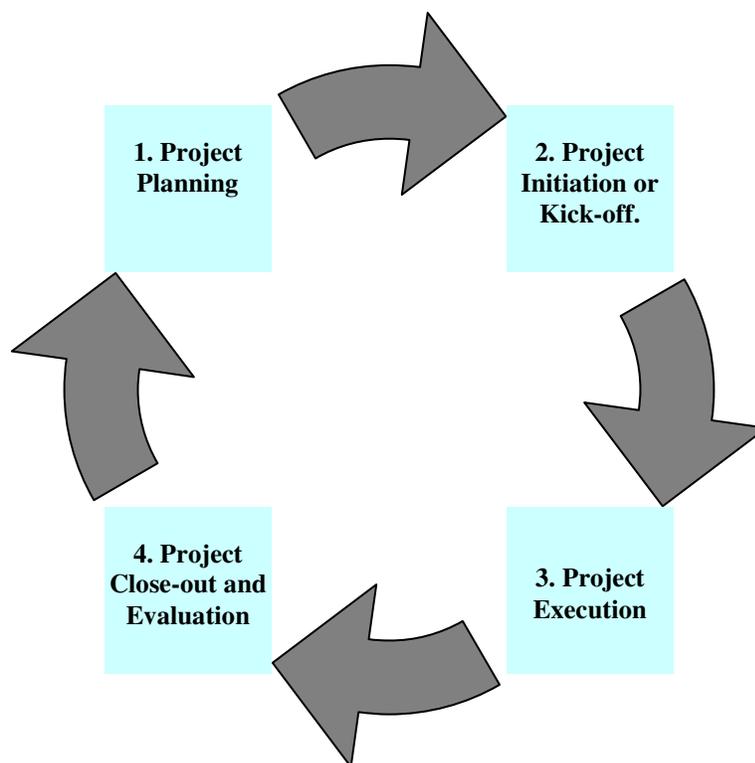
- **Performance**—more than ever, high performance and being effective requires an ability to work seamlessly across organizations. Consultants can contribute significantly to your organization’s performance.
- **Staffing Limitations**--Government is not likely to increase staffing despite the increasing responsibilities and mandates.
- **Knowledge and Experience**—effective and productive working relationships depends on the experience and knowledge—gained through being involved in numerous projects
- **Specialized Expertise**—consultants can be hired to secure expertise in unique or non-recurring specialty areas
- **Efficiency and Return on Investment**—well managed consultant projects can have substantial benefits in relation to their cost and can be a highly efficient expenditure of public funds -- as you are paying the consultant for **effort**, not **duration**
- **No Room (or Reason) for Failure**—working effectively with consultants should not require a back-breaking effort on your part, but does require good, collaborative project planning and communication to limit or eliminate the probability of a failed or flawed project

Learning Objectives

1. Understand all content in terms of a basic customer- supplier model and standards of professionalism.
2. Increase your confidence and ability to effectively work with consultants.
3. Be able to train and inform others using the materials provided.
4. Describe the importance of effective and productive client-consultant working relationship.
5. Describe key principles related to accountability, performance, communication, and shared responsibility in the client-consultant relationship.
6. More effectively manage projects that involve consultants through every phase of the project life cycle (4 phases: planning, start-up, execution/control, close-out).
7. Effectively use the various templates and checklists contained in this guidebook.
8. Develop a customized action plan to begin applying this course to with the greatest challenges and opportunities you identify today.
9. To better understand how to benefit from the competitive market of service providers.

Guidebook Design and Use

- This Guidebook is designed for:
 - Familiarization of concepts and practices through active participation in the course
 - Quick and frequent reference—Text Minimization
 - Use of practical experience based pointers and applications (such as checklists, tables, forms, etc.)
 - Thinking systematically about projects at each key phase:
 - Project Planning (pre-contract)
 - Project Initiation or Kick-Off
 - Project Execution
 - Project Closeout and Evaluation



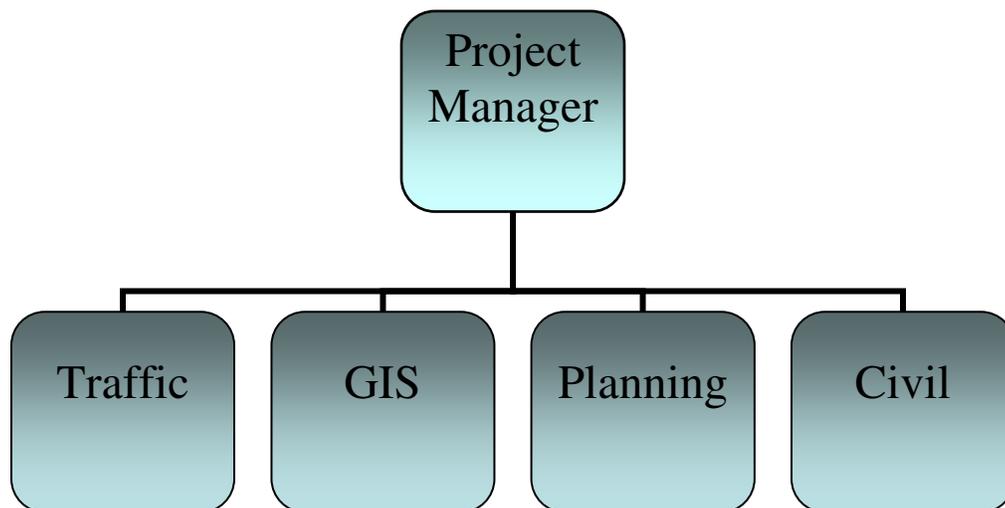
Terminology—Consultant, Contractor, Vendor, Client, Customer

- Consultants and Consulting are broad terms.
- Local governments, municipal authorities, planning agencies, etc. hire a wide range of service providers.
- In this course the umbrella term “consultants” applies to any external provider of services which could be vendors, contractors, engineers, planners, management experts, etc.
- The course’s principles and content are experience based and generally applicable to all of these service contract arrangements.
- Client, Customer, Municipality etc. are used interchangeably in this guidebook.

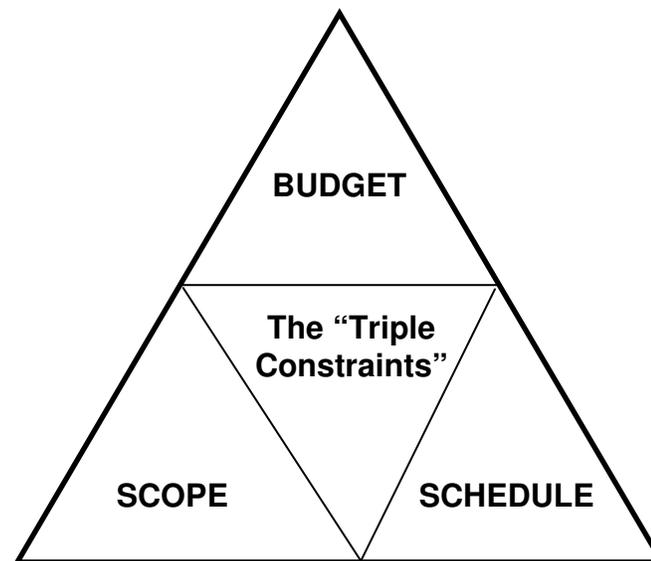
Consulting Industry Overview

1. Highly **competitive and market oriented**—governments don’t yet fully recognize this, but should to leverage it more to their advantage and the public’s benefit!
2. **Survival** = Quality and Customer Service
3. **Highly incented** to be both effective and efficient
4. Most consultants and **consulting firms are not rich**. These firms often operate on small (if any) profit margins. By the way, every organization has overhead costs. When you pay for an hour of a consultant’s time you are paying for salary plus overhead plus profit. This is often referred to as a “loaded” or “burdened” rate. Clients sometimes mistakenly believe this is what the consultant earns in his or her paycheck! While a project budget does include overhead and profit, you only pay for the consultant’s time on the project. If a project takes 100 hours of effort, that is all you pay. If that 100 hours of effort spans a duration of 30 work days or 240 hours you are still

- only paying for the 100 hours not the 240 hours. That is not the case with your own staff. They are paid regardless of whether or not they have lots of work to do...or little...or even none. Staff pay includes overhead, too (e.g., benefits).
5. High degree of expertise and diverse experience—the **diversity of experience** can be of great value to you.
 6. Typically **problem-solving oriented** and attentive to client and customer needs.
 7. Consultant profitability requires a high volume of work—consultants are good at **balancing multiple projects and priorities**, but will sometimes give greatest customer attention and communication where that expectation has been established by the client.
 8. Consultants operate as **matrix organizations** rather than top-down hierarchies, bringing together a wide range of technical skills, disciplines, and subject matter experts across their organizations and other organizations to form a project team. This ability to assemble the necessary expertise to address your needs is to your GREAT benefit.



9. Consultants and consulting firms are not perfect. **They will make mistakes as will you.** Projects and working relationships need to be healthy, to be able to surface mistakes early, solve them quickly, and adjust efficiently and effectively.
10. The **“Triple Constraint”** - Consultants should be highly watchful and attentive to of budgets, scopes, and schedules. Communication about this should be regular, candid, constructive and professional.



The relationship between client and consultant can be strengthened by a good, shared understanding of the connection between scope, budget and schedule. Don't become a "client constraint" by not fulfilling your obligations.

Remember – changes to scope may impact cost. Discuss first with your consultant.

**Successful Projects:
Busting some common myths and misconceptions!**

Common Myths & Misconceptions	Myth-Buster
I have no control over the consultant’s performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have far more control than you realize or even need – start with your wide range of contract terms that you set.
The consultant won’t provide the staff they proposed to win the job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing plans and acceptable/ flexible procedures for replacements can be built into the contract.
Consultant projects never finish on time or within budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize projects with realistic milestones and interim deliverables and progress reviews. Require greater realism and testing in establishing schedules and budgets (e.g., defining the critical path and work breakdown structure). Consider progress reviews or updates at select budget milestones
I am always surprised or let down by the final product. It never seems to be quite what I wanted or expected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Success Factors” established at the beginning of the project give everyone a shared understanding of what the finish line is supposed to look like.
I am never sure how or if the work is progressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish regular progress communication as an early expectation. Make progress reports simple,

Common Myths & Misconceptions	Myth-Buster
	<p>meaningful and more about “movement than motion”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When in doubt, pick up the phone.
<p>The end results always leave me a little flat and lack creativity, innovation, or problem solving applicability. It is difficult to implement the project or move to the next phase.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest more time at the outset of the project discussing and documenting desired outcomes, results, innovations, what project success looks like. Also focus on requirements for implementation.
<p>Project success depends entirely on the consultant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is by far the greatest myth to debunk—consultants may simply be at the bottom of the food chain and too easy a target to cast blame when a project fails. • The best consultants and the best projects require collaboration, involvement, communication and a systematic approach for involving the client. • Project failure can often be caused by the consultant, the client, but most always a combination of the two.

Effectively Working With Consultants: Guiding Principles & Common Sense

1. **Recognize the unique Roles & Responsibilities of the Project Manager**—and maximize it.
2. Make sure expectations are not a secret and are not one directional.
3. **Communicate frequently**—formal and informal communication fosters a positive atmosphere for working together.
4. **Surface problems early**—little problems should be known and corrected before they ever can become big problems—encourage this kind of approach to team building.
5. **Function as partners** without you assuming the consultant's responsibilities for project success or vice versa.
6. **Use every project as an opportunity to learn** – reinforcing successful approaches and improving upon those things that were less than successful. Share these experiences with each other without slandering past negative experiences.
7. **Be candid, be constructive**, don't hold back—encourage the same from the consultant in an atmosphere of professionalism. Provide feedback.
8. **Be inquisitive**—ask lots of questions – don't ever assume.
9. **Build trust**—communicate trust and integrity as non-negotiable items—in both directions.
10. **Set the bar high**. In all settings, performance relates to goal setting and communicating expectations.

Unit Objectives

- To assist local governments to effectively plan a project and define important requirements in advance of hiring a consultant.
- To make informed decisions in evaluating and selecting consultants.

Defining Project Requirements, Outcomes, and Closeout Criteria

Overview

Project failure can often be traced back to a failure to specifically define project requirements, outcomes and closeout criteria *before* the project begins. This is usually a basic, but powerful step. Ironically, it is often a step overlooked or given inadequate attention. In a war this is called an "exit strategy". The same principle of defining "end results" applies to any project.

Principles

- There are several simple methods to define the desired end results for a project. These can often overlap, but the fundamental questions follow:
- What are the project's intended **outcomes**? In other words, what specifically should be different, better, changed, more efficient, etc. as a result of the project?
- Are there any specific **requirements** associated with the project? Requirements may be particular to the project itself or may be a legal or regulatory requirement. There may be any number of requirements, including schedule and required completion date. Municipalities should think through the critical requirements. Not everything is a critical requirement. In planning a project, requirements should be limited to those essential, non-negotiable items that are known from the outset.
- **Closeout criteria** are somewhat similar to outcomes and requirements and can overlap. It poses a powerful question drawn from the field of auditing, but applicable to virtually any project: When this project is effectively completed and closed out, what has occurred? Closeout criteria can also be defined later in the project cycle with your consultant as part of a kick off meeting or project initiation.
- **Consensus on outcomes among key decision makers or project owners.** The power of defining your requirements, closeout criteria, and outcomes is important too from the perspective of making sure that all key project owners or stakeholders generally agree on them. If not, you can expect problems. If decision-makers are not in consensus at a project's start, it may be a prescription for project failure. Make certain that you know the range of decision-makers – who they are – as part of defining the project.

Application: Project Requirements Worksheet

Project Name:

Project Leader:

Project Outcomes: List the specific outcomes that must result for the project to be successful upon completion:

1.

2.

3.

(Optional and Possibly Used at Project Kick Off Meeting): Project Closeout Criteria: When this project is effectively completed and closed out, what must occur?

1.

2.

3.

Other Critical Project Requirements:

“Make-Buy” Decisions

Overview

Not every project requires the use of consultants in whole or in part. Conversely, there are some activities that may be done “in-house” that could and should be done by a consultant. The idea of a good make-buy decision is to stop and consider the need for the consultant.

Principles & Pointers

There are 5 basic factors to consider in make-buy decisions. Not every one of these has to be satisfied to make a decision to do the work in house or contract out. Depending on the project and the circumstances, any one or two factors may tip the decision either way.

- **Capacity**—do we have the internal resources to get the job done? What other work would be sacrificed if we take on this project on our own? Safety should be considered as part of capacity as well.
- **Capabilities**—do we have the necessary expertise, knowledge, skills, equipment or other capabilities to perform the work on our own?
- **Priorities and Timing**—how does the work fit with our present priorities? Does the priority or timing in any way affect whether we perform the work on our own, contract it out or even defer it? Can we do the project in discrete phases?
- **Cost**—how much will it likely cost to conduct the work in-house? How much can a consultant perform the work for? Don’t hesitate to ask for an estimate from a few consultants. Is it the kind of work that we can compare make vs. buy on a unit cost basis?
- **Sharing/Partnering**—potentially some of the project can be done in house while certain task or disciplines can or should be contracted. A simple Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) can be very helpful in making this assessment. A WBS is essentially an

organizational chart, but instead of people project tasks are laid out and then organized and sequenced. Certain technical capabilities may not exist in house be it GIS, or financial, or management analysis, etc.

Make vs. Buy Analysis

- **Does the municipality have the expertise to carry out the assignment in whole or in part?**
 - **Are there specialized services required that are not available internally?**
 - **Where possible, compare the costs of in-house versus outsourcing.**
 - **Does the municipality have the time to carry out the work even if the skills exist?**
 - **Is there the need for independence that can somehow be structured through the contract? (In-house project could be *perceived* as biased in some instances.)**
 - **What has the performance track record been in the particular area?**
 - **What does the local government sacrifice by completing in-house versus outsourcing?**
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Application: Make-Buy Checklist

This checklist is intended to systematically facilitate your make-buy decision.

Project Title:

Make-Buy Checklist Item	Assessment
<p>Capacity: what is our capacity to perform the work? Also, any safety considerations?</p>	
<p>Capabilities: Do we have the required expertise, knowledge and skills?</p>	
<p>Priorities and Timing: How does this project affect or fit in with current priorities? Can it be deferred or phased?</p>	
<p>Cost and Cost Comparisons: would it be less or more expensive to hire a consultant? What are the real costs of doing the project in house?</p>	
<p>Sharing and Partnering: are there particular tasks that can and should be done in house and some done by a consultant?</p>	
<p>Make-Buy Recommendation or Conclusion:</p>	

The Project Budgeting Challenge

Top down? Bottom up? Consultant generated? Developing an estimate.

Overview

There are different views on how a consultant project should be established. One challenge is that grant funded projects often dictate a budget top down rather than a bottom up approach that quantifies all tasks, the hours to complete the tasks, the level of person assigned, etc.

In an ideal world all project budgets would be calculated in a bottom up manner. That does not occur however. To the extent possible, municipalities should have some reasonable estimate of the cost and what they are willing to spend before advertising for a consultant. It is also recognized that the competitive selection process may be the means for establishing the cost of a project.

Principles & Pointers

- 1. Grant Funded Projects**—if a project is grant funded and the dollar amount is known, make that known in your advertisement. The competing consultants should know the budget in order to assemble a responsive proposal. You may receive proposals that have wildly varying assumptions about resources. Cost is not a factor then in this type of project. Selection essentially is on qualifications only, so have a level playing field.
- 2. Develop a cost estimate for your project**—even if it is a back of the envelope estimate or approximate cost range to be later refined. Research similar projects and how much they cost by contacting other communities, consultants, PSATS, DCED or others depending on the project.
- 3. When Budget Is Not Known/Set or Money Is Not a Primary Constraint**—don't advertise the funds available in this case. Let consultants compete on both qualifications and cost.

Performance Standards & Performance Based Contracts/Projects

Overview

Some projects involve activities that have established performance standards through industry practice, professional credentials, or other sources. You may also want to consider whether there is the need to define unique performance standards for the project being considered.

Principles & Pointers

1. Performance standards should be limited to areas of significance for a project.
2. Performance standards can be made contractual which is why this topic should be considered in advance of advertising.
3. Consultants should have an opportunity to respond to your standards and propose how they will achieve those standards, what their relevant experience and qualifications are in relation to the standards and if they care to suggest other relevant performance standards.
4. Some contracts can be structured to pay consultants based on accepted interim and final deliverables that have met the established performance standards. The question to consider is whether this is necessary or beneficial to do so.
5. Consider performance standards specific to the technical aspects of the project as well as general performance standards that may be important to you such as project management standards (e.g., monthly status meeting, progress reporting, etc.).
6. Consider the quality aspects of a project and whether they lend themselves to being defined in terms of a performance standard.
7. Be careful about setting performance standards for activities that may be beyond the consultant's control such as achieving unreasonably high response rates on surveys for example.

Effective and Efficient Solicitation

“Smart Requests For Proposals”

Overview

Requests for Proposals and other solicitations for consultant services can be both efficient and effective. In most cases, you are generally better off by keeping RFP’s and other solicitations simple, concise and to the point.

Principles & Pointers

1. **RFQs**—you can consider requesting qualifications of consultants rather than proposals if you want to first assure yourself that there is a field of existing and interested qualified firms. RFPs can then be sent to those firms you first deem to be qualified.
2. **RFI’s**—A Request for Information is a tool to help you **research key pre-contract information** in advance of making a decision to advertise or use consultants. **Be considerate of the consultants and their time.** Keep information requests brief and to the point for the respondents. They are spending money to respond. **Make sure the playing field is level**—that any consultant has a reasonable chance of responding through advertising, etc. **Involve your Solicitor** in the RFI process to ensure that it is appropriate and that the playing field is level. The RFI questions should be limited to the key unresolved questions or issues you need to better understand before deciding whether to proceed with the project.

Keep information requests very brief and to the point for the respondents. They are spending money to respond.



CAUTION: Do not abuse this process by turning it into a full blown proposal process.

3. Keep Your RFPs, Invitations to bid, etc. clear and basic.

- Indicate the **purpose** of the project
- Provide a **single point of contact**
- Do not provide so much information that you unintentionally limit consultant creativity, problem, understanding and innovation in their proposals.
- Research examples of good RFPs in the associated subject areas through state agencies and others.
- **Involve the funding agency** to provide input in the RFP development and the selection process. Investors should always have input for their investments.
- **Indicate the factors (criteria) for selection and any weights** associated with those factors, e.g., understanding of the problem, personnel, approach, cost, etc.
- **Provide a few weeks for consultants to respond** unless you have a legitimate time crunch.
- Whatever your key concerns, cares, or desires are for the project make sure before sending out the RFP that it is structured to generate responses in those areas of key interest.
 - Examples: Qualified PM
 - Experience with similar projects
 - Available staff

- If you know or think there will be interviews of consultant firms indicate so. If there is no need to interview, don't interview. It is an additional cost to the consultants.
IMPORTANT: If you are able to make your selection based on the evaluation of proposals do so and don't add the interview step.
- Pre-Bid or Pre-Proposal Conferences can be considered. Do so if you believe there is benefit to you and the consultant to discuss the RFP in advance of receiving proposals. The benefit of these meetings is often not worth the time and effort, particularly for small projects.

Consultant Evaluation & Selection

Evaluating project qualifications and experience of professionals

Overview

As the customer, you need to make selection decisions that give you confidence that you are selecting the most qualified firm or team among a field of qualified firms or teams. The most important aspect of this is to consider your selection criteria in advance. Make sure that the selection criteria reflect project success factors and are weighted if need be. Even the best selection criteria does not rule out intangible factors that may tip the balance in a close selection, such as the demonstrated interest, enthusiasm, and commitment of the firm to serving you and your community.

Principles & Pointers

1. **Evaluation Committee**—if you have an evaluation committee, keep its size manageable and its composition representative of the project.
2. **Independence**—evaluation committee members must be independent and impartial in making their recommended selections. They must not have a direct or indirect interest in the success of any firm competing to win the job.

Evaluation committee members must be independent and impartial

3. **Appropriate Selection Criteria**—limit your evaluation to the criteria that are pertinent to the project. Provide a criteria list or worksheet to each evaluation panel member to use and to score independent of others on the panel. Common selection criteria often include items such as:
 - Understanding of the problem

- Experience and demonstrated capabilities with similar or related projects
 - Staff proposed to work on the project
 - Creativity or Innovation in proposed approach(es)
 - Cost—typically done separately after technical evaluation has been completed, but if it is a low bid contract cost is the basis for selection among qualified submitters that is
 - Project Manager/Project Management Approach.
4. **Rating and Weighting**—some criteria may be more important than others. Your consultant evaluation criteria can rate based on a point scale such as 1 to 5 to represent the lowest to highest rating. You may also then need to weight the factors so that not all factors are treated equally. If the proposed approach, for example is deemed to be most important assign a greater weight to that factor. Tabulate ratings and weighting by selection criteria category, compare and discuss the results among the team to reach a consensus on selection.

Criteria	Rating	Weight	Score
Problem Understanding	4	4	16
Staff	5	3	15
Experience	5	3	15
Creativity	4	2	8
Cost	4	2	8
Total Points			62

5. **Intangibles**—scoring is usually a fairly good indicator of the best team to select. However, in close calls, there may be intangible factors that legitimately come into the discussion. This can include things such as enthusiasm, commitment or even location (if that was not a formal selection criterion). Just make sure to document the basis of your decision if it does come down to intangible factors in order to defend your decision and to make sure it was well reasoned and fair.

6. **Reference Checklists** – It is a good practice to ask for relevant references from similar projects and contact them.

Application: Sample Format for Interviewing Consultants

*By Denny Puko, DCED Governor’s Center for Local Government Services
PSATS Convention - April 2007*

It is best to interview consultants consecutively the same day. Use one-hour time slots per consultant scheduled as follows:

Suggested Time Allotment	Key Activity
<i>25 minutes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant team set up • Introductions of consultant team and municipal interview team • Presentation by consultant team • Key information – qualifications, experience, approach, etc. • Introduction to personnel who will perform the work • Reasons why the consultant is best for the job
<i>20 minutes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions by the municipal interview team and answers by the consultant team – challenge consultants with real issues, challenges and anticipated problems.
<i>5 minutes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing statement by consultant team • Identification of next steps and timing in consultant selection process • Consultant team take down
<i>10 minutes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break and stretch time for municipal interview team • Buffer time before next consulting team arrives

Suggested Guidelines

- The interview process should be communicated to candidate consultants in advance.
- Order of interviews should be selected randomly (drawn from a hat)
- **Establish Ground Rules** - Meet 15-30 minutes before the first interview to review process, roles, Q&A questions, etc.
- **Identify Roles in Advance** - Have one member of the municipal interview team serve as leader, facilitator, and time manager for the interview.
- **Consultant Time Management** - Consultant set up time is included in first 25-minute segment. Whatever time it takes consultant to set up takes away from its presentation time.
- **Stay on Schedule** - Interviews should be kept on schedule. Each interviewed consultant should be afforded the same amount of time and be treated the same. No consultant should be allowed to set up before its allotted time slot begins or linger after its allotted time ends.
- **Prevent Bait and Switch** - Make sure consultant personnel who will serve as project manager and principal performers of the work are present and involved in the interview.
- **Do Your Homework** - During Q&A, ask same question(s) of each consultant. Prepare questions in advance.

Contract Negotiation: Scope, Cost, Schedule, Other

Overview

While this is not a course about negotiation, the subject is obviously relevant to effectively working with consultants.

Principles and Pointers

1. **Embrace Negotiations**—negotiation is a good thing for both parties. Too often it is treated as adversarial and to be avoided. A good negotiation of the proposal benefits the project. Lots of give and take results in a better project!
2. **Treat a Proposal as Just That**—the winning proposal may not be perfect in your eyes. Remember, it is only a proposal. Use the negotiation to discuss ways in which the proposal can be improved or clarified to best meet your needs. Have a mark up session with your selected firm. Recognize that some changes to scope may also change cost as well. Be prepared for that healthy give and take. Borrow some ideas or concepts you like from the other proposers.

The winning proposal may not be perfect in your eyes. Remember...it is only a proposal, not a contract.
3. Do not expect scope additions that you are not willing to pay for.
4. **Allocating Resources** - Consider if there are any elements of the scope that you want to decrease or deemphasize in order to expand/shift effort elsewhere in more important areas.
5. The Final Scope with all changes agreed to by you and the consultant becomes a part of the contract. **Yes, the revised proposal should be part of the contract. Don't forget that.**
6. The final contract package should include a master agreement that includes the terms of the grant agreement (if there is one), your local contracting requirements and your project scope, budget and schedule.

7. It is a good practice to have the contract end date follow the scheduled project end date by 4-6 weeks at minimum to allow for any final closeout activities, etc. that often occur.

Effective Contracting/Contract Type Briefly Considered

Overview

An effective project contract is one that is understood by the project team, not just the Solicitor or the consultant's attorney. The general provisions (terms) of the contract should be understood by both parties as should the scope, budget and schedule of course.

The general provisions of the contract should be understood by both parties.

There are various types of contracts such as cost plus fixed (or percentage) fee, time and materials, and lump sum.

Principles & Pointers

1. If there is no restriction on contract type, discuss with the consultant their preference. **Cost-plus contracts** have advantages and disadvantages. Typically this is a contract that reimburses consultants for their labor and other direct costs (e.g., travel, supplies) as included in an approved project budget. A percentage for profit (typically 10%) is included and a contract maximum amount is established. The consultant invoices for actual work and costs, but cannot exceed the maximum project budget amount. If the effort for completing work that is in the approved scope exceeds the budget, such cost overruns are the responsibility of the consultant, not the client. Work that is out-of-scope should first be agreed to with a budget supplement and scope amendment.
2. There are myriad advantages to **lump sum contracts** for both the client and the consultant. Among them are ease of administration and more fairness in terms of risk-reward.
3. Even when using a lump sum contract dollar amount it is not unreasonable for you to have the consultant justify their proposed

lump sum budget. You should. But once accepted and agreed to there should be no reason for nit-picking the consultant's budget.

4. **Simple Letter Agreements** are appropriate and administratively simple for small, short-term projects.

Defining Key Milestones/Milestone Management

Overview

Managing by milestones is one of the most important principles of good project management and for effectively working with consultants. It is included here as a pre-project item even though milestones can be defined or modified later on as the project begins. Hopefully the consultant will propose key milestones if you do not define the milestones in your RFP.

Principles & Pointers

1. Milestones are like football halftime—a chance to effectively take a pause in the project to ensure that things are on track and that progress is where it should be according to schedule and budget. Coaches often adjust strategy as well to win in the second half. Milestone reviews involve making adjustments to get on or stay on track.
2. Milestones should be few, but significant, and easy to understand.
3. Milestones can be associated with major project phases (compilation or grouping of tasks) or major tasks.
4. A milestone review should bring together consultant and client and key stakeholders as necessary to review progress, address any concerns, share information and make adjustments or budget reallocations as needed.
5. Milestone review results should be concisely documented by the consultant.

Unit Objectives

- To understand the unique importance of project start-up and the value of this investment.
- To become familiar with project start-up activities.

Unit Overview

This unit is the most important with respect to establishing the foundation for an effective working relationship with a consultant. Project start up has everything to do with establishing effective two-way communication, establishing approaches to accountability, and the constructive and candid sharing of expectations.

Project start-up is like building a foundation to a house.

In terms of time spent project start up is typically not extensive. But it is like building a foundation to a house. The ultimate house stands or falls on the strength of its foundation. So too project start up is about framing the project in ways that strengthen the client-consultant relationship and that add to the likelihood of a successful project.

This unit includes topics that are particularly important and fundamental to the question of how to effectively work with consultants.

Project start-up occurs after a contract has been executed and notice to proceed (NTP) has been given to the consultant. The first step is typically the preparation and holding of a project kick off meeting.

Most importantly, project start-up is a time to make sure that everyone's responsibilities are defined and understood right up front. This includes tasks, administrative activity, meeting minutes, etc.

Effective Kick-Off Meetings/Team Building

Overview

It is worth the time to plan and organize a project's Kick Off meeting. **The kick off meeting should be scaled to the project size.** A major project may have a more extensive kick off meeting with more participants than a smaller project. But the basic principles and pointers covered below (as well as the application dealing with potential agenda items) should routinely be considered as a project starts. The Kick Off meeting should result in a concise meeting summary containing the most important points in each area. It should also result in establishing the project's initial action plan.

Principles & Pointers

The following points describe the key areas of attention for a project kick off meeting. The points described in this section cover the major bases to help you understand and follow a smart approach to project kick off.

- 1. Schedule and Staff**—set a time and location for the kick off meeting that works for consultant staff (that should be involved) as well as local officials and stakeholders as applicable. The respective project managers should always participate as this meeting mainly has to deal with the effective management of the project. This is a great opportunity for municipal leaders to participate and stress how important the project is to them—this sends a powerful message to all. **This is a great opportunity for municipal leaders to participate and stress how important the project is to them.**
- 2. Draft and Refine Kick Off Meeting Agenda** (see application for more detail)—the consultant should develop a draft agenda in advance of the meeting for your review and input. It should be finalized in sufficient time to provide to all participants in advance of the meeting.

3. **Discuss & Understand Project Scope and Schedule**—by this point, the project scope and schedule has typically been established through the proposal and the contract. All participants however, need to **understand** the scope and schedule. This only occurs by discussing it task by task and taking the opportunity to ask questions, clarify items, and have a healthy give and take between the municipality and the consultant. Often this is the first time that the consultant project team has met the client so it is good to have this exchange to substantially inform and amplify that which appears on paper. Consultants often understand their own work scopes better after a kick-off meeting!
4. **Verify Roles and Responsibilities**—a project organization chart is a starting point for roles and responsibilities. It should be discussed particularly so that all participants understand who is responsible for various aspects of the project. It is also constructive to cover the municipalities’ roles and responsibilities generally and project specific responsibilities too. In most cases the client should also name a project manager in order to have a primary point of contact.
5. **Share Expectations Early**—oddly enough the most important client expectations are seldom reflected in the scope of work. The best time to openly, frankly, and candidly lay out expectations is as the project begins. Unstated expectations can become clouded later on resulting in “I didn’t know that” kinds of responses from either or both sides.
6. **Define Project Success Factors**—time should be taken to list on a flip chart or a white board the key elements of project success—this can be done in terms of project requirements, closeout criteria, and/or key outcomes as covered in the previous unit. Discuss what success looks and feels like and contributes to enthusiasm and shared understanding of the project’s end game.

The most important client expectations are seldom reflected in the scope of work.

Typically this agenda item can be simply addressed by developing a shared list of consensus project success factors:

This project will succeed if _____?

This project will fail if _____?

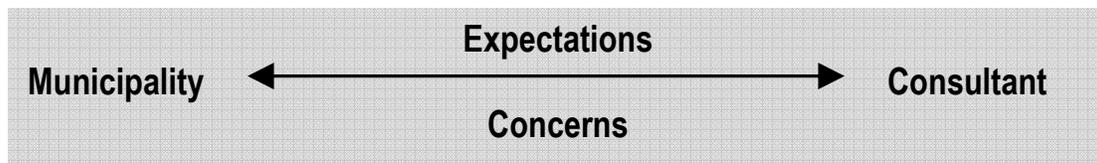
This basic list can be of great value for the consultant in taking actions to ensure success and to prevent the causes of failure or a less than successful project. This is a much better approach than learning about project success and failure on the fly throughout the project!

7. **Verify Communication Protocols and Progress Reporting**—most projects have some form of progress report, usually provided along with an invoice. The following is a good format for a progress report: This progress report format is designed for:

- simplicity
- focusing on real progress and issues
- ease of sharing with others to keep them informed
- tracking results month to month in relation to planned activities.
- focusing on movement over motion—real results vs. process and activity.

Expectation Management: A proactive approach for encouraging candid discussion between the client and project consultants.

- Municipality creates an environment for the two-way sharing of expectations and concerns.



Application: Sample Project Progress Report

This sample project status report can be submitted as part of monthly project invoicing. This can also be customized to meet any reporting requirements you in turn may have with other (state/federal, etc.) funding agencies.

Project:
Project Manager and Contact Information:
Progress For the Period of:
1) Significant Progress for the Period Completed:
2) Planned Progress and Accomplishments for the Next Period:
3) Issues Demanding Attention:
4) Recommended Ways to Resolve Issues Demanding Attention:
5) Budget Status (in relation to percent complete)

Communication Protocols cover a wide range of possible discussion, but the main question deals with how to ensure effective communication throughout the project. This most typically includes:

- developing a **contacts roster** that is attached to the kick off meeting summary
- defining key points of contact for various technical aspects of the project
- establishing whether there is a sole point of contact for the consultant and the municipality
- how and who should handle **legislative and media inquires**
- **informal communication** such as keeping in touch on a regular basis by phone—this is sometimes established, in fact, as an expectation so that progress is not only reported through the system of progress reports but also the habit of good project managers of touching base with the client. If beneficial, develop a basic **communication plan** for the project.

8. **Review Project Milestones**—medium and large projects can often be organized in phases and tasks. The completion of a major project phase should have specific results or expected progress milestones associated with it. As such, this should be an occasion for a timeout milestone review.

Milestones provide the opportunity to manage projects in smaller chunks.

- Project milestones should be covered as part of the kick off meeting, particularly a **focus on the first upcoming milestone** and any immediate activity to move toward it. Projects are complex; manage them one phase or milestone at a time.
- Milestones provide the **opportunity to manage projects in smaller chunks** that when successfully carried out contribute to an overall successful project.

9. **Begin Project Action Plan**—an action plan is a simple, yet effective and efficient tool. It fosters good communication and accountability. It minimizes surprises. The action plan also saves money by eliminating the need for detailed meeting minutes and excessive project documentation. The Kick Off meeting is the time to establish how frequently the action plan should be updated, who will receive it and what it will contain. Action plans help to capture all kinds of follow up activity that is not covered in the scope. It should not be redundant with the scope. It should include actions that not only the consultant but that the municipality and others are responsible for. A general format appears later in this guidebook.
10. **Develop a brief Kick Off meeting summary** - the consultant should document the results of the Kick Off meeting by developing concise listing of key decisions related to the varied topics covered. This can usually be covered in a couple pages along with the initial action plan in which any follow up items were identified in the kick off meeting. The meeting summary and action plan should be provided back to those who need it within a business week or less. Why? It reinforces accountability for follow-up, emphasizes momentum, and limits the chances of confusion or mix-ups.

Informational Needs of the Team

- **Summary of Project Goals, Objectives and Milestones**
 - **Description of Roles & Responsibilities of Key Personnel**
 - **Individual Task List**
 - **Clear Definition of Authority**
 - **Schedule**
 - **Due Dates for Reports, Meetings and other Recurring Activities**
 - **Sample of required Reports, Forms and other Documents**
 - **Procedures for Reporting Problems**
 - **Contact Information for Key Project Personnel and Vendors**
-
-

Application: Kick Off Meeting Check List for Agenda Setting

No two kick off meetings are the same. They can be basic and brief for small projects and sometimes a major milestone event for large complex projects. This checklist is for your use and your consultant’s when planning a kick off meeting. The list is a good tickler of potential topics for the meeting. **Not every item has to be covered for every project.** You can check off those that apply in setting your agenda:

Possible Kick Off Meeting Agenda Item	
Project Importance	✓
Review of Project Goals and Objectives	✗
Data Collection Issues	
Review Project Scope, Schedule and Milestones	
Budget Review	
Discuss Expectations	
Project Success Factors, Risks, Closeout Criteria, Outcomes	
Roles and Responsibilities	
Communication Protocols	
Progress Reporting & Invoicing	
Project Action Plan & Follow-up	
Project Specific Topics -- To Be Determined	
Other project specific agenda items	

Application: Basic Action Plan—Project Tracker

The action plan is often the first agenda item for future progress meetings or calls. The following provides a good general template for an action plan.

Project Action Plan			
Project: _____			
<i>Action Plan As Of: (Date)</i>			
Action	Responsible	Notes	Status=X is complete – remove after next update

Client Roles and Responsibilities (Local Government)

Overview

Project success does not only rely on the consultant. Too often, we fall into the false expectation that the project is solely reliant on what the consultant does or does not do. Early in the project is the time to consider what the municipality's responsibilities are and how they will be fulfilled. Often client responsibilities fall into areas such as these:

- Being reasonably accessible to the consultant to communicate and to help resolve problems
- Providing information
- Keeping the consultant informed of any developments that will or could impact the project
- Providing work space if available and beneficial for the project
- Providing candid and complete feedback on work to date in a timely manner
- Carrying out certain elements of work agreed to in the scope specifically or as stated assumptions. Scope and budget creep occurs when the consultant has to perform work outside the scope because it was not carried out as agreed to. The consultant technically does not have to do this work, but may feel compelled to maintain the client, this is not fair.
- Paying the invoices promptly!

Consultant Project Manager Roles and Responsibilities

Overview

It is important for local governments to share an understanding of the essential responsibilities of the consultant project manager. This section briefly reviews those roles and responsibilities and provides a ready reference (and reminders) as you engage in your projects. **Further information about PM roles and responsibilities is found in the “Additional Information” section at the back of the Guidebook.**

Primary Responsibilities—the primary responsibility of the consultant project manager is to deliver the project according to the scope requirements, on time and within budget.

- **Schedule Adherence**—overseeing all task activity—even that performed by diverse members of the team and subconsultants—to make sure that all tasks are completed on time to satisfy the overall schedule. This speaks to the primary role of the PM as a task integrator.
- **Budget Adherence**—the PM is responsible for effectively managing and deploying resources including monitoring and tracking budget expended in relation to project percent complete. Budget management also entails regular communication with the client about budget status and the identification of any actual or potential problems and how they might be resolved.
- **Meeting Client Requirements** -- (as set forth in the scope of work and the contract). This also entails the quality standards or expectations associated with the project. Important Note—given the importance of quality consultant firms will often assign a senior project principal to provide additional attention that quality requirements are being followed. This is referred to sometimes as QA/QC, quality assurance and quality control.

Secondary Responsibilities—not unimportant in any way, but secondary to the triple constraint responsibility of budget, schedule, requirements.

- Proactive communication
- Problem identification and problem solving
- Client interface, prime point of contact
- Ensuring that project files and project records are well maintained, even though is often a delegated task, the PM must make sure there is a comprehensive project file.
- Internal team unity, coordination, and working as a unit
- Subconsultant oversight
- Progress reporting.
- Being entrepreneurial and innovative problem solvers.

Consultant Team Roles and Responsibilities

You should be aware that the project team depends on a well functioning team, not just an effective PM. Working effectively with consultants means that the entire team is responsive to the community and that there are shared and recognized values for the team roles and responsibilities as follows:

- Being responsive to the PM
- Executing assignments efficiently and effectively
- Providing a solid hour of work for each project hour on the timesheet
- Proactive communication and information sharing
- Shared commitment to the project's success
- Commitment to the client and the project objectives.
- Being entrepreneurial and innovative problem solvers.

**Left to themselves, things tend to go from bad to worse.
- Murphy's Seventh Law**

Consultant Staffing / Staffing Changes / Other Contingency Planning

Many clients are keenly interested in the matter of having the right consultant professionals assigned. This is a valid area of interest.

1. **Staffing Plans** - If the proposed staffing plan is critical to the project's success, determine with the consultant how to achieve a commitment to adhere to that plan as closely as possible.
2. **Position Rate Tables** - Be flexible with respect to staffing for positions that are not necessarily key to the project's success. Consultant organizations need flexibility too. Position Rate Tables establish an average or upper limit rate for various staff categories, allowing the consultant to assign any qualified staff within those rates.
3. **Contingency /Succession Planning** - For positions that are key to a major project, you are entitled to ask the consultant what contingency plan would be followed if that person or persons moved on to another organization, got sick, etc. Contingency planning should include using a sub-consultant if the expertise is not available through the prime consultant.
4. **Advance Approvals** - You may also consider requiring advance approvals to staffing changes for key positions. Do not do this for other positions. It is the equivalent of killing a flea with a mallet.

Setting Expectations—Getting Them All on the Table Early

Expectations should be shared by the local government and the consultant. Consider this in areas such as:

- Trust and candor
- The kinds of results you want to see or product that must result
- Information sharing
- Surfacing of problems early
- As much or more attention as any of their best clients would receive
- Follow through
- Meeting deadlines and providing early warnings if deadlines are in jeopardy.
- Quality products
- Prevention of re-work
- Focus on results, action, and implementation.
- Treatment of and respect for the public and project stakeholders.

Effective Communication—Formal and Informal Systems and Practices

Overview

Poor communication is *the* key factor in failed projects. This can take the form of failure to communicate small problems before they become large problems, not asking questions when you have them, or extended periods of no interaction between the municipality and the consultant.

Principles & Pointers

The following principles are applicable to most every project:

1. The consultant PM is responsible for carrying out both formal and informal communications and setting the tone for healthy exchange of information on a regular basis with the client.
2. You should **raise questions constructively** and early when you are concerned about the condition of the project or project communications.
3. Verbal communication is fine for many matters on a project. When a communication entails a matter of accountability (e.g., for a significant action or follow up item) **it should be provided to you in writing** as well (e-mail etc).
4. Because we rely on e-mail so much today, you should **establish a folder in Outlook** for each project you are involved with as the municipal point person and save consultant e-mails in that folder.
5. **Handwritten notes** such as a **record of telephone conversation** are also a valid communication record and can be placed in the project file as well as proving copies to others with a need to know. No need to have them typed, just please write neatly!
6. **Evaluate consultant communication** at the close of the project and even at major milestones. Be candid; be constructive. If you have waited months to share concerns, it is not fair to beat up the consultant all at once.

Application: Sample Telephone Memorandum

Memorandum of Telephone Conversation

RECORDED BY:	JOB NO.:
SPOKE WITH:	ORGANIZATION
TELEPHONE NUMBER:	DATE: TIME:
SUBJECT:	
ITEM(S) DISCUSSED:	
FOLLOW UP ACTIONS:	
COPIES TO:	
PROJECT FILE/NAME:	

Accountability

This too is a topic worthy of an entire course. It is important to make a few key points that will help to always keep accountability in view.

- Consultant projects are designed for accountability. That is why we package them in a contract to start. The commitments are binding unless agreed otherwise amended by both parties.
- Project Managers are the primary point of accountability, but to be effective PMs must effectively delegate both responsibility and accountability in many areas. Ultimately though the PM is responsible for the project's success. The buck does stop there.
- The consultant is accountable **to** you **for** the project work as agreed to and to do so professionally.
- The local municipality is accountable for the commitments it has made to the consultant. This accountability should not be shifted as finger pointing can and does happen. **Client accountability** is as real and important as consultant accountability. Please discuss and reinforce that accountability is a shared, two-way street for every project. Specifically, this means understanding what people are accountable for and who they are accountable to.
- With failure to be accountable come consequences. Corrective and punitive actions hopefully will not be necessary, but these are covered in the next unit.
- Accountability is often viewed as negative word or concept. That is too bad. For projects it should be an affirmative concept, focusing on understanding the key aspects of accountability for the entire project and performing according to the accountability framework.
- The consulting firm also is part of the accountability chain. Normally you do not have to contact the firm beyond the PM or the Project Principal. However, if you have unresolved problems with the project you should bring it to the attention of the firm's leadership. This should be a rare situation. Do this only after the PM or Principal has not addressed your concern. Consulting firms care about you as a customer. They want your feedback. They want to solve problems rather than losing a client or being fired.

The Role and Place of Leadership

Overview

“Working with Consultants” would not be complete without some treatment of leadership. As you know management and leadership are not necessarily the same thing. Managers should be leaders, but every project offers opportunity for other leadership both from the client and the consulting team. We see a leadership vacuum today in many spheres of life. We should expect good leadership and that includes our projects as well.

Principles & Pointers

- All projects run into some bumps in the road—leaders keep moving forward.
- Leaders remain positive and constructive and set that tone for their teams and for the client.
- Leadership is a consistent can do attitude even when things get tough.
- Leadership is making sacrifices at times for the success of the project.
- Leadership is being man enough or woman enough to welcome constructive criticism and to act on it.
- Leadership is being open to new ideas and change.
- Leadership is having a strong sense of ownership for the project, caring about its success and quality more than just getting it completed.

A boss creates fear, a leader confidence. A boss fixes blame, a leader corrects mistakes. A boss knows all, a leader asks questions. A boss makes work drudgery, a leader makes it interesting. A boss is interested in himself or herself, a leader is interested in the group.

- Russell H. Ewing

Unit Objectives

- To understand the challenges associated with project execution and ways to bolster an effective working relationship with the consultant.

Unit Overview

Generally speaking, if your project has been well planned and has been effectively organized through the early initiation phase, the probability of success will be much higher. The trick is this, the practices and procedures covered in the previous units now need to be followed consistently as the project is carried out. The emphasis in this unit therefore centers on ways in which your working relationship with consultants during the execution of the project can be effective.

Managing Quality/Quality Systems

Overview

Quality is the broad umbrella under which any project is managed. Consistent quality is so important to the client and to the competitive position of consulting firms that many have adopted rigorous quality policies and supporting systems. ISO 9001 is an example of a quality system that requires companies to be certified and audited in terms of compliance with quality standards at every phase of project execution.

You can ask your firms about their quality policies and procedures. The intent of quality systems is to meet your requirements while limiting or avoiding rework completely. Major components typically include these elements to benefit you:

- A corporate quality policy adopted by leadership to guide all facets of quality practices and procedures
- Standards for quality review of all products
- “Go-no go” considerations before pursuing a project, including assessments of risk and capabilities to effectively perform the work
- Client feedback, including a client project evaluation form submitted to corporate leadership at the project’s close
- Filing and records retention, including evidence of quality assurance activity
- Finally, the development of a Project Execution Plan or PEP as the means for ensuring effective procedures for meeting all project requirements and ensuring quality products
- The **PEP** or its equivalent is developed at the start of the project. While this is typically an internal activity, it does not need to be. The consultant can and should involve you in defining the PEP. This is not a major effort and can be covered through the kick off phase by addressing those core issues of defining project success in your terms and how that will be achieved.

Application: Sample Project Execution Plan

Project Execution Plan – Template Example

Project Number: _____ Last Revised: _____

Office/Division Code: _____

Project Manager: _____

Project Title: _____

Client: _____ Client Manager: _____

Address: _____

PEP Distribution List: _____

- I. **PROJECT OVERVIEW** (*What the Client wants to achieve - Description, Objectives, Approach and Stakeholders*)

- II. **PROJECT SCOPE** (*Scope Definition, Scope Verification, and Scope Change Control*)

- III. **PROJECT TIME** (*Activity Definition, Activity Sequencing, Activity Durations, Project Schedule and Project Schedule Control*)

- IV. **PROJECT COST** (*Resource Planning, Cost Estimate, Cost Budget and Cost Control*)

- V. **PROJECT QUALITY** (*Quality Planning, Quality Control and Quality Assurance*)

- VI. PROJECT PERSONNEL** (*Organizational Structure, Staff Acquisition, and Team Development*)

- VII. PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS** (*Communications Planning [including paper & electronic filing and document control] Information Distribution, Performance Reporting and Administrative Closure*)

- VIII. PROJECT RISK** (*Risk Identification, Risk Analysis [including adverse risk score], Risk Response, Risk Monitoring and Control*)

- IX. PROJECT PROCUREMENT (SUBCONSULTANTS)** (*Procurement Planning, Solicitation Planning, Solicitation, Source Selection, Administration and Closeout**)

- X. PROJECT CLOSEOUT** (*Contract Closeout and Administrative Closeout*)

Prepared by: _____

Approved by: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Progress Reporting & Problem Reporting

- A generic progress report format has been provided in Unit 3.
- That form is generally effective for any type of project. Before you use it however consider if you need to customize it in any way with respect to the key specific requirements of your project.
- Your project, for example, may have some **numeric targets** that have to be achieved on a monthly basis. Such a target could be included along with the actual completed number of units for the month. If, for example, the consultant was to survey 15 businesses a month, you may want them to report on how many successful surveys were indeed completed in relation to the target. Such information does not necessarily have to be in the monthly progress report if there are more simple communication systems that are in play throughout the month such as weekly calls, meetings, or informal communication.
- **The consultant team should be encouraged or directed to advise you of problems as they occur.** The general principle here is that there should not be secrets between the supplier and customer. Every project has problems. It is better to know about them and how they are being addressed than being kept in the dark. Some problems do go away without intervention or involvement of the client, others don't. The emphasis here is on good, open two way communication wherein problems are not viewed as terminal or uncommon and that resolution often is better – and yes easier and less painful --through more frequent communication and collaboration.

Every project has problems. It is better to know about them and how they are being addressed than being kept in the dark.

Project Record Keeping and Documentation—KISS/KIC Principles

Overview

- Project record keeping is a routine activity during project execution. The primary principles are to keep it simple, but to keep it complete (KISS/KIC).
- Project record keeping is primarily the responsibility of the consultant and should include but not be limited to:
 - **requested or directed work that is out of scope**—out of scope work should not be performed unless it has been approved by the client and a budget change has been agreed to if indeed the scope change results in increased effort and cost.
 - **records of meetings and teleconferences** through meeting notes of key decisions and follow ups
 - **Keeping the project action plan current**—normally this occurs through updates stemming from project review meetings or other significant meetings or events that generate follow up or require new decisions or directions.
 - **Data analyses, spreadsheets, completed surveys and other data sources** that support project findings, conclusions and recommendations. If the client implements some changes based on the consultant’s data and recommendations you may need at some point to access this important source data.



Some Diagnostic Tips for Effective Oversight

Overview

Project execution may span anywhere from a few weeks to several months or a year or more. What are some practical tips for oversight and diagnosing a potential for problems? The flags below do not necessarily mean there is a problem, but are certainly indicators of the need to find out. Here are some red flags and related pointers:

- The frequency of consultant initiated contact with you has dropped.
- Upcoming milestones are drawing near with no apparent indication of planning, organizing or progress toward the milestone accomplishment.
- Set up budgeting/billing up front in relation to project tasks, phases, or milestones so that there is an understood link between progress and resource utilization.
- Progress reports and invoices are late—progress reports lack specificity.
- Invoicing (hours and dollars) seems way ahead of actual progress.
- Staff changes at key position levels without communication of such changes, including key project staff leaving the firm.
- Major products for meetings, etc. have not been provided to you in advance for review and/or courtesy.
- Tip—you should not hesitate to call the consultant from time to time or even drop by his or her office.
- Ask for a verbal update—how are things going? Are there any problems? Can we assist the team in any way to keep things on track? A constructive, positive but inquiring approach like this can

You should not hesitate to call your consultant from time to time

go a long way to displace anxiety or even shame associated with project slippage.

- Ask for confirmation as to what is occurring with the project now, what the next major activities or deliverables are and the associated schedule.
- Ask others involved in the project what their impressions are—such as stakeholders, your staff, etc. This is called third-party feedback.
- If there are concerns follow due process—share the concerns with the consultant without being accusatory, but expecting the accountability of specific and valid response. Projects, for example, do fall behind schedule at times, but can get back on track with greater concentration of effort, etc.

Maintaining a Professional Relationship

- Clients and consultants are sometimes friends or become friends. That is fine.
- Over the course of a long project such good, personal relationships do build. But, there is the absolute need to also maintain a professional relationship that does not hinder the relationship of client-consultant.
- This is generally known by most consultants and they will honor the two level relationships as service provider and friend.
- Make absolutely sure that the friendship does not in any way distort the professional relationship and the accountability for results associated with it.
- Discuss directly the boundaries of business and personal relationship and how not to cross either.
- The business relationship has been compromised if the client is no longer willing to provide direction, criticism, etc.

Make sure your friendship does not distort your professional relationship

As Project Manager, what relationship should I have with the consultant?

- **A business relationship – plain and simple**
- **Avoid the tendency to feel as though you have to please the consultant**
- **You are the consultant’s customer and not vice versa**
- **A respectful business relationship will make it easier to make hard decisions as necessary**
- **The consultant will respect a business relationship that is predictable and based on mutual trust and commitment.**

Review Item--Milestone Reviews—“Halftime Huddles”

- ✓ Hold **milestone reviews** at pre-determined major project events or the completion of phases or major tasks
- ✓ **Assess** where the project is doing well, areas that need attention or adjustment going forward
- ✓ **Review schedule** and if the project is on track
- ✓ Consider the project’s **“critical path”** those tasks that depend on other tasks to start or finish on time in order for the overall project to remain on schedule
- ✓ Discuss the original project **success factors** and constructively consider how the project is progressing in relation to those factors
- ✓ Discuss what the **next month looks like** in terms of progress or getting tasks back on track that may be lagging
- ✓ If **interim products** have been developed make an assessment of how well such products meet expectations
- ✓ Review how **project communications and progress reporting**, etc. are going and if any changes are necessary
- ✓ **Summarize the results** of the milestone review as a brief list of decisions or follow ups or incorporate these into an update of the action plan

Review--Basic Meeting Summaries/Minutes

Overview

- Some projects do benefit from meeting minutes
- Keep minutes from becoming hours—so to speak
- Use your agenda items as the basis for organizing the minutes
- Focus briefly and concisely on key decisions, issues, and follow up. Avoid extended narrative and transcription.
- Valuable minutes are brief and informative. Use a format such as the one shown below.

<p>Project Name Meeting Venue/Date Meeting Minutes</p>
<p>Meeting Participants:</p>
<p>Subjects Covered—<i>Briefly List</i></p>
<p>Key Decisions, Directions and Responsibilities</p>
<p>Follow Up(s) <i>(incorporate in project action plan instead of minutes if there is an action plan)</i></p>

Corrective Action Plans (if needed)

Overview

- Let's hope that most projects run fairly well and that small problems can be corrected fairly easily as they occur.
- A Corrective Action Plan is a necessary and valuable tool for the client and the consultant when problems are not being effectively resolved.
- In general, a decision to request a Corrective Action Plan should come after other avenues have not worked or if the problem is important enough to warrant a CAP. This is a judgment call.
- The Corrective Action Plan should be signed by the respective project managers and if necessary more senior level officials.
- A generic format is provided on the following page and is adaptable.

REMEMBER: Corrective action plans approached as a means to define a problem, its root causes and accountable actions to resolve can sometimes prove to be the positive turning point for problem projects.

Corrective Action Plan			
Project Name _____ Date _____			
<i>Briefly list below specific problems or issues resulting in the need for the CAP. Attempt to the greatest extent possible to isolate the causes of problems.</i>			
List Corrective Action(s)			
Action/Timing	Responsible	Comments and Status	Successful Completion
			✓ = complete
Signatures and Dates <i>(When Issued and Accepted—Acceptance Indicates Agreement With Plan)</i>			
_____		_____	
Client		Date	
_____		_____	
Consultant		Date	
Completed <i>(Sign below after all corrective actions have been satisfied)</i>			
_____		_____	
Client		Date	
_____		_____	
Consultant		Date	

Scope, Budget and Schedule Changes—Contract Amendments

- It can be difficult, but all participants should respect the scope, budget and schedule and strive to stay within its boundaries.
- As a project progresses it is easy to forget about the scope or stray from it. Clients may request work activity which is okay if it is within the scope and budget. If it is not, the consultant has the professional responsibility to discuss scope and budget adjustments.
- Work should not progress outside of scope until there is some written agreement, a simple e-mail or contract amendment that there has been a mutually agreed to change in scope and budget.
- There can also be non-cost scope changes where one set of activities has been replaced with another. Again, only do this work after the agreement of the change as been put in writing and pre-approved.
- Schedule changes occur often and are frequently mutually agreeable.
- A no-cost time extension can add time to the project and avoid the danger of doing work beyond the contract expiration.

Group Discussion – Causes and How to Prevent:

- 1) Scope Creep
- 2) Budget Creep

Client Service—A Philosophy, A Practice, A Habit, An Expectation

- A Philosophy?
- A Practice?
- A Habit?
- An Expectation?

- Yes. Yes. Yes, and Yes.

- Client service should be a hallmark of Project Execution.
- Consultants should be exhibiting:
 - Proactive attention to your needs
 - Anticipating problems and acting on them
 - Soliciting your input, ideas and feedback
 - Making your job easier in various ways
 - Touching base with you informally
 - Making the municipality shine to the public and third parties involved with the project.

- As your professional relationship with consultants grows, so too should be your shared understanding of what constitutes good client service

Unit Overview

The project closeout phase entails making sure that all project requirements have been satisfied, that learning (feedback and two way evaluation) has occurred, and that you are in a position to move forward to (further) implement your project.

Project Closeout is often ignored or under-emphasized by both client and consultant. The project is completed and people move on to other priorities and assignments without giving due attention to proper closeout.

TIP: Hold 80 percent project complete reviews and develop closeout punch lists – also revisit closeout criteria

Eighty Percent Project Complete Review Meeting

- This is not the closeout meeting or the project evaluation
- Projects should build in an initial closeout review at about 80% to 90% completion point.
- The objective of this meeting is to make sure that everyone is clear on remaining closeout activity. This can include scope items as well as other activity important to a satisfactory project completion – e.g., file transfer.
- Conduct a scope review, covering if various tasks and deliverables have been satisfied
- If some scope items have not been completed and there is legitimate reason for not doing so that is acceptable, document that in the meeting summary
- Have the consultant prepare the punchlist and provide a copy back to you as soon as possible.

Budget Retainage

- A client management control
- Retainage is normally a set aside of 5% to 10% of the total project budget that is paid to the consultant upon successful completion of the project, including acceptance of items on the punchlist
- Retainage must be a term of the contract, not arbitrarily introduced to the project
- The consultant's invoice can reflect the Retainage as a running total
- Bottom line—Retainage does provide a degree of control for you that project requirements are satisfied
- Retainage should not be excessive, as consultants' cash flow is important as well to their effective functioning.

Project Closeout Meetings—High Value/Seldom Used

Overview

Soon after the project is completed hold a project closeout meeting. An agenda should be jointly developed and should address items such as any or all of the following:

- Transfer of files, data, records as needed
- Client evaluation of consultant
- Consultant evaluation of client
- Review project closeout criteria (from start of project)
- Administrative items including final invoicing
- Positive lessons learned—what worked well and should be repeated and built on in future jobs
- Opportunities for improvement
- Recognition of superior efforts or performance—decide whether to provide a commendation letter or letters to team or individuals
- Discussion of any key implementation phase or next steps that follows depending on project type
- Celebration!

Hold a project closeout meeting after the project has been completed

Performance Evaluation—Two Way: Client and Consultant

Project Performance Evaluation Checklists

Evaluation Factors of Consultant Menu:

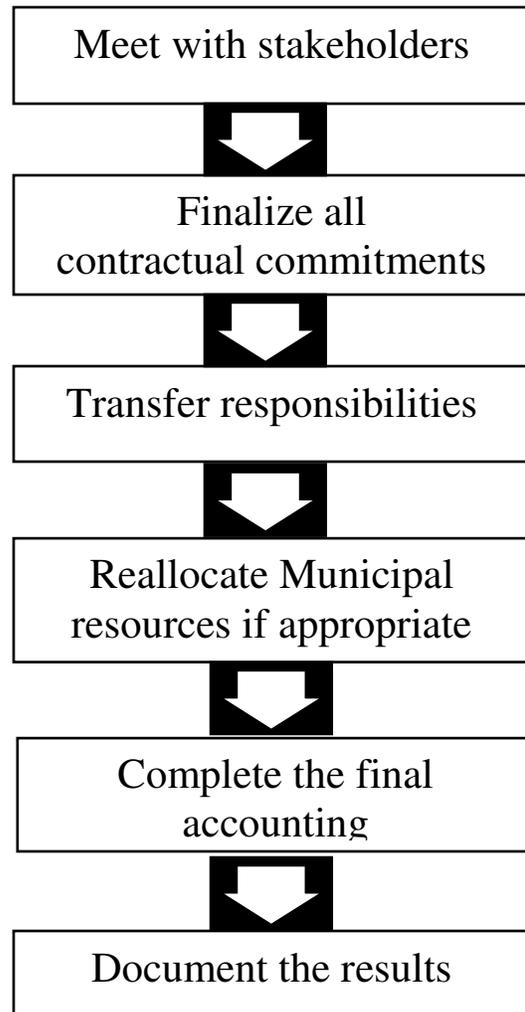
- ✓ Schedule adherence
- ✓ Project requirements satisfied
- ✓ Customer service
- ✓ Responsiveness
- ✓ Project Management
- ✓ Communication

Evaluation Factors of Client:

- ✓ Accessibility
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Direction
- ✓ Participation in defined areas
- ✓ Frequency and value of feedback as needed

Summary/Wrap Up

1. Working with Consultants effectively should be a win-win proposition
2. Government will increasingly be engaged in make-buy decisions
3. Effective public administrators increasingly will be those who can lead consultant teams as managers of virtual organizations
4. The most effective means for working effectively with consultants is to:
 - Accept that success is a two way street and act accordingly
 - Plan your project well, especially with respect to defining objectives or outcomes
 - Establish sound communication and problem solving processes
5. Evaluate every project and use each project as a building block for learning and continuous quality improvement
6. Look for opportunities for positive leadership and building leaders on both sides of the team!



Overview

- Let's revisit your list of challenges or problems.
- Identify some ways you will now address them.
- Report back briefly 1-2 strategies or actions you will follow!

Working With Consultants
Train-the-Trainer Course Evaluation

Friday, April 18,2008 (PSATS)/Instructor: Keith Chase

Part I—please provide a rating from 1 to 4 with 4 being the highest or best rating and 1 being the lowest or worst rating possible for each of the following questions:

	LO	←→	HI
A) Please rate the overall relevance of today’s course to you and your municipality	1	2 3	4
B) The likelihood that I/my municipality will apply course content in my organization	1	2 3	4
C) The instructors’ knowledge and presentation of the subject matter	1	2 3	4
D) The opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas	1	2 3	4
E) The physical facility and related amenities	1	2 3	4

Finally, your opinion on the importance of this subject over the next 2-4 years (circle only one that reflects what is closest to your opinion):

- Its importance will increase substantially
- It will become slightly more important to local governments
- No change
- It will be less important

Part II—Open-ended Input (use next page)

A) Ideas for future improvement of the Guidebook, the course, or other comments. Include Train-the-Trainer related recommendations.

Why Projects Succeed

- A realistic plan is established and followed
- Stakeholders are involved throughout the project
- Conflict is quickly surfaced and resolved
- An effective Project Manager
- Project goals and objectives are fully agreed upon
- Team members understand and commit to them
- Progress reporting and monitoring systems in place from start to finish
- Task and resource requirements are identified and properly budgeted
- If policy allows, necessary adjustments are made to overall budget when any task exceeds its budget
- Similar projects are studied to learn what worked well and what did not.

Project Manager Roles & Responsibilities

- 1. Champion**
- 2. Visionary Planner & Organizer**
- 3. Resource Analyst**
- 4. Communicator**
- 5. Team Leader**
- 6. Team Player**
- 7. Problem Solver**
- 8. Self-Motivator**
- 9. Steward**

Project Manager Roles: Champion

- Takes ownership of the project
- Maintains momentum through ups and downs
- Markets the project internally and externally
- Sees the project as a means to an end, not an end in itself
- Encourages other champions
- Remains flexible without compromising key principles

Project Manager Roles: Visionary Planner & Organizer

- Stays several steps ahead of the project team
- Takes steps today to address tomorrow's requirements
- Cultivates the same habits in others
- Anticipates worst case scenarios and prevention
- Promotes a “no surprises” atmosphere
- Articulates project success factors (regularly reviews and demands those success factors)

Project Manager Roles: Resource Analyst

- Identifies the best use of limited resources:
 - capital
 - time
 - equipment
 - technology
 - people
- Recognizes resource planning as an ongoing project requirement
- Brings the right people into play at the right time
- Recognizes that consultant is subordinate and must serve the project objectives
- Leverages consultant activities with internal employees
- Plays a diagnostic role in the proper deployment of resources

Project Manager Roles: Communicator

- Communicates on a project in a complex network of interactions
- Establishes framework with project team to foster honest, open communications
- Uses concrete, specific terms when dealing with issues of budget, schedule, and quality
- Commits to improvement in communication with every project
- Recognizes the significant Return on Investment (ROI)
- Encourages project team members to take their pulse on this once in awhile
- Does not view “no news” as good news

Project Manager Roles: Team Leader

- Offers direction, but not as a tyrant
- Focuses on outcomes, not on being “the boss”
- Involves people in decisions and actions
- Brings out the best in people

Project Manager Roles: Team Player

- Models appropriate behavior for team members
- Accepts tasks and responsibilities readily
- Demonstrates commitment
- Defers to other team members in certain areas, such as on technical issues or where they have more experience
- Creates shared ownership of the project

Project Manager Roles: Problem Solver

- Shares problem-solving with the team
- Involves critical and creative thinking
- Fixes problems, not blame
- Establishes a climate for problem-solving
- Identifies problems early and resolves while small

Project Manager Roles: Self-Motivator

- Recognizes self-motivation as the source of team motivation
- Identifies with project quality personally
- Remains a constant regardless of temporary situations
- Acts, even when down, rather than putting things off

Project Manager Roles: Steward

- Emphasizes a primary commitment to the larger community served by the project
- Chooses service over self-interest
- Balances power so that all involved in the project act openly and honestly as mutually accountable partners
- Encourages stewardship from the entire project team
- Stewards
 - finances of the organization
 - results for the client
 - time of those involved
 - resources of the team

3 R's of Project Manager Stewardship

- **Responsibility for results to customers**
- **Responsiveness to stakeholders of the project**
- **Respect for team members through shared choices, flexibility and empowerment.**