

# Aligning Expectations

## DQC and ATR - What You Should Know

2015 National Planning Community of Practice Training

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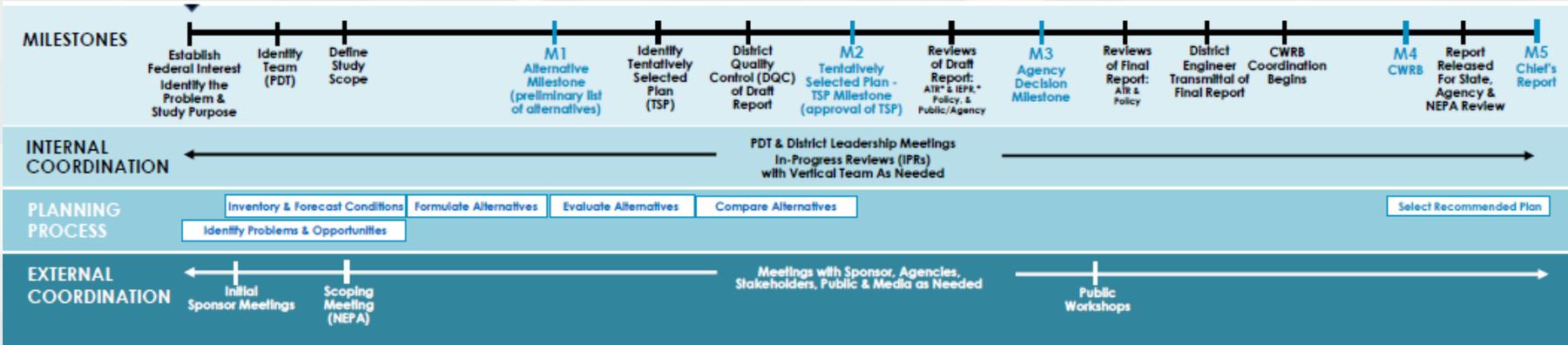
**U.S. ARMY**



US Army Corps of Engineers  
**PLANNING SMART  
BUILDING STRONG**

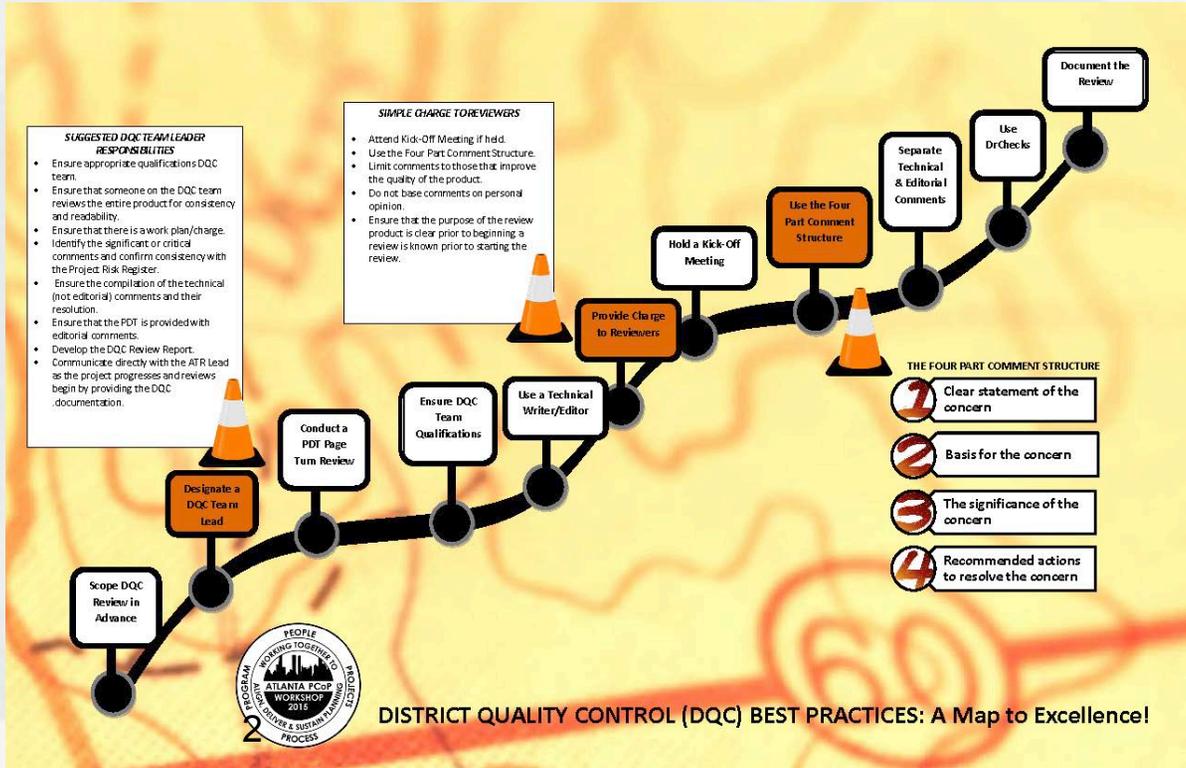


# Handouts



Review Timeline  
(check out larger version in poster area)

DQC Road Map



# Presentation Format

- District Quality Control
  - ▶ Guidance
  - ▶ Best practices
- Agency Technical Review
  - ▶ Review guidance and tools
  - ▶ Overview of the review process
  - ▶ Discuss lessons learned for successful reviews



# District Quality Control (DQC)



# Introduction

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



# Introduction

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



# DQC Guidance

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



# DQC Guidance

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



# DQC Guidance

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



# DQC Guidance

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



# DQC Best Practices

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



# DQC Best Practice

## Why use a DQC Review Report

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

Documentation  
Tool



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

Communication  
Tool



# DQC Best Practice

## Suggested Review Report Components



# DQC Best Practice



Clear statement of the concern



Basis for the concern



The significance of the concern



Recommended actions to resolve the concern



# DQC Best Practice

- Use of DrChecks
  - ▶ Familiar to District employees
  - ▶ Easy documentation & archiving
  - ▶ Formal tracking system



# DQC Best Practice

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



# DQC Best Practice

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



# DQC Best Practice

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



# DQC Best Practice

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



# Agency Technical Review (ATR)



# Presentation Format

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



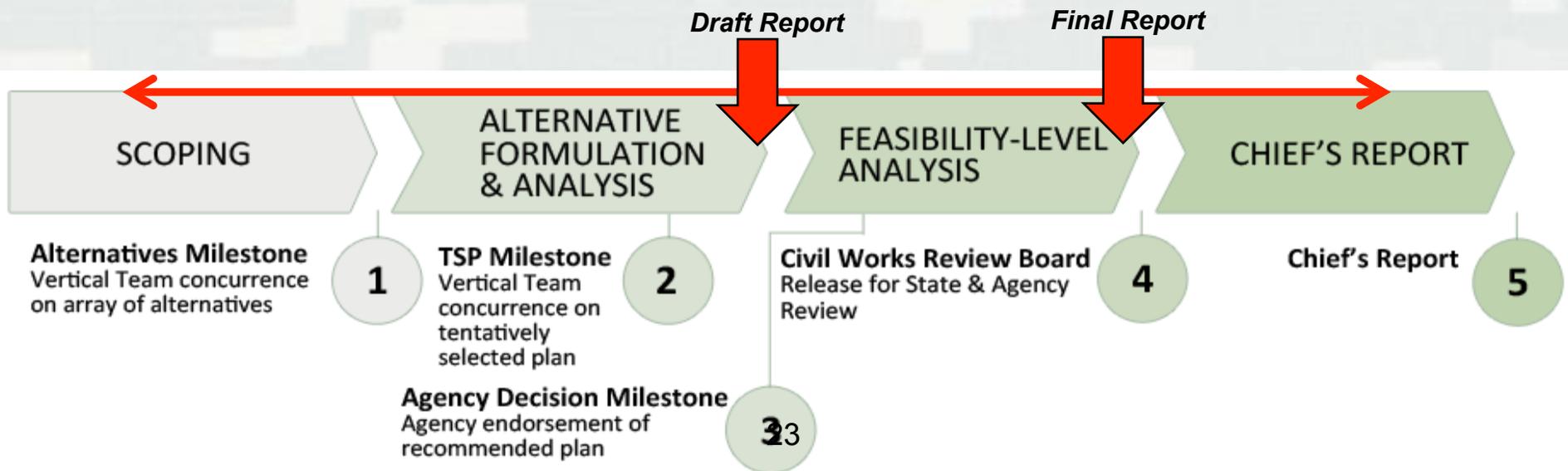
# What is ATR?

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



# When to do ATR?

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



# Who Does ATR?

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



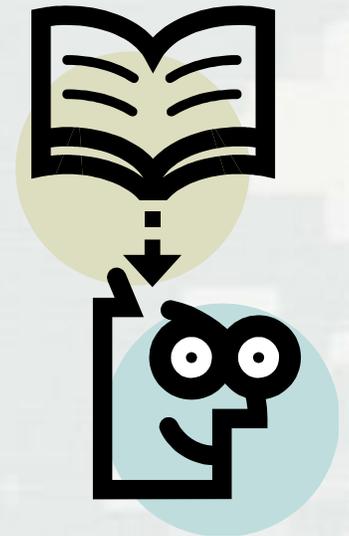
# Who Does ATR

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



# Beginning of ATR

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



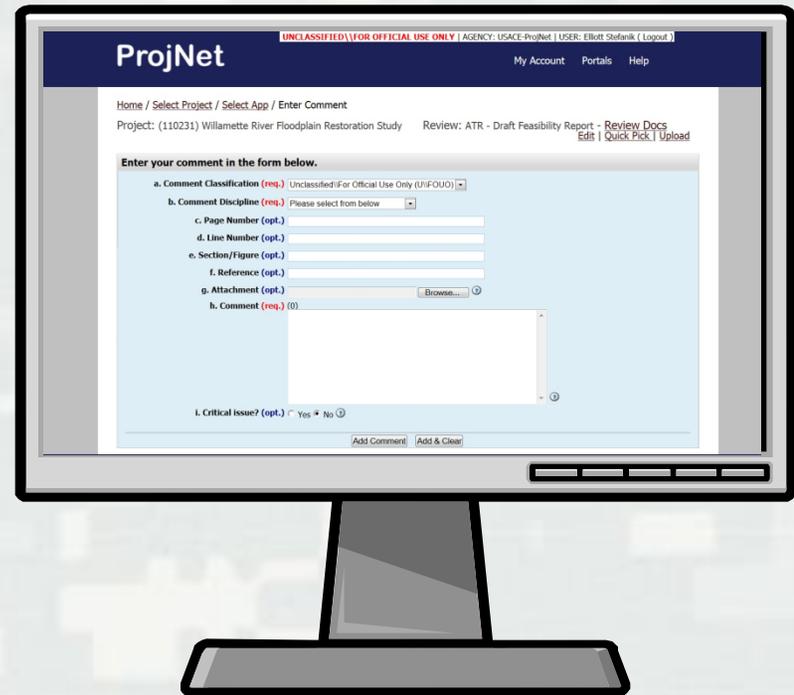
# ATR Overview

- Review tools
  - ▶ Planning CoP Website
    - <http://planning.usace.army.mil>
  - ▶ SMART Planning Guide
    - <http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/smart.cfm>
  - ▶ EC 1165-2-214 Civil Works Review
  - ▶ ER 1105-2-100 Appendices G and H



# ATR Overview

- Each ATRT member shall:
  - ▶ Review his/her discipline elements
  - ▶ Review project consistency across disciplines
  - ▶ Provide comments in DrChecks



# How to “Do” an ATR

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



# Review/Comment

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



# Offline Comments

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



# Review/Comment

- ATR comments should follow the four part comment structure

-  Clear statement of the concern
-  Basis for the concern
-  The significance of the concern
-  Recommended actions to resolve the concern



# The Evaluation

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



# The Evaluation

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



# The Resolution

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



# The Resolution

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



# ATR Conclusion

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



# ATR Costs

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



# Lessons Learned for Successful ATR

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



# Additional Take Away Points

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



# Discussion

