

# Guidelines for the Planning and Design of the IAEA 2028–2029 Technical Cooperation Programme

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## A. Objective

1. These guidelines provide the framework for the development of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA's) technical cooperation (TC) programme for 2028–2029. They define roles and responsibilities, process and timeframe, and available services for the planning, design and development of the 2028–2029 TC programme.

## B. Introduction

2. The IAEA is an intergovernmental organization established by its Statute. Its TC programme builds human and institutional capacities in Member States for the safe, secure and peaceful application of nuclear science and technology, in line with the IAEA's statutory mandate<sup>1</sup> and relevant decisions of its governing bodies. In so doing, the programme contributes to addressing the major sustainable development priorities of each country, with the goal of increasingly promoting tangible socio-economic impact.
3. The TC programme is based on the principle of shared responsibility between Member States and the Secretariat. Projects developed under a TC country programme are expected to demonstrate strong national ownership and support through national resources. The projects in each country programme are developed through a consultative process that involves all relevant stakeholders, using the TC central criterion<sup>2</sup>, the results-based management approach and logical framework approach (LFA), to identify the priorities, problems and gaps that need to be addressed, together with the expected results to be achieved, taking into account available resources including national project resources.
4. The planning of TC national projects should be directly aligned with the respective national development priorities. The Country Programme Framework (CPF) is the platform to reflect the national development priorities to be supported by the TC programme. The CPF is a strategic programming tool prepared jointly by the Member State and the Secretariat. It defines national development needs and priorities to which nuclear science and technology can be applied to produce

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<sup>1</sup> Under Article II of the IAEA Statute: “The Agency shall seek to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. It shall ensure, so far as it is able, that assistance provided by it or at its request or under its supervision or control is not used in such a way as to further any military purpose.”

<sup>2</sup> See IAEA document GOV/INF/2002/8/Mod.1.

tangible results. The CPF provides a results-focused structure to the country programme based on country specific analyses and lessons learned from past technical cooperation. The CPF also indicates the national resources available to the implementation of the country programme. CPFs are aligned with national development plans, relevant sectoral strategies and policies. Regional strategic plans, profiles and frameworks are key reference documents for the development of regional and interregional projects, ensuring alignment with defined and prioritized regional and interregional needs. In the absence of CPF, clear link should be made to national development plans.

5. The TC programme cycle is aligned with the IAEA's Regular Programme to allow strategic allocation and leveraging of all available Secretariat resources (programme management, funding and technical expertise).

## C. Guiding Principles for Project Planning and Design

6. The IAEA Statute and the *Revised Guiding Principles and General Operating Rules Governing the Provision of Technical Assistance by the Agency* as contained in [INFCIRC/267](#) comprise the IAEA's established guiding principles for the formulation of the TC programme. Programme formulation is also guided by relevant decisions of the governing bodies.
7. The TC programme is needs-based and demand-driven. Priorities are established at the national level based on CPFs, where available, and national development/sectoral plans. At the regional level, programme priorities are based on regional strategic frameworks and regional profiles.
8. The Secretariat works closely with Member States to ensure that project proposals are in line with the [TC Programme Quality Criteria](#) (2020), namely relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and ownership. To increase efficiency and effectiveness, significant consideration should be given to comprehensive projects with the potential for longer term impact<sup>3</sup>. Member States are encouraged to give increasing emphasis to integrated, multi-year projects<sup>4</sup>. Consideration should be given to design fewer but larger projects with an adequately planned project duration dependent on the context, complexity, scope, past experience and the type of nuclear technology involved.
9. Partnerships with other stakeholders (including potential donors) that can contribute to the proposed project are strongly encouraged and should be identified, sought out and established early in the project planning and design process. Member States are encouraged to work with traditional or non-traditional donors for their respective TC programmes and projects.
10. The IAEA uses the LFA as a standard tool for results-based management across the complete TC programme and project life cycle. All projects should be designed to achieve results based on thorough analysis. It is essential that measurable and realistic results are defined using clear baseline information, SMART targets and relevant performance indicators<sup>5</sup>. These are necessary elements to measure progress and impact and will facilitate project monitoring and reporting, using the mandatory annual Project Progress Assessment Reports (PPARs) as well as the final Project Achievement Report (PAR). Member States are encouraged to integrate good practices and lessons learnt from past projects using the information gathered from monitoring assessments and evaluation tools, to inform the designs of new projects.
11. The Regional/Cooperative Agreement Strategies and Regional Strategic Profiles (RSPs) are the foundation for the planning and formulation of regional projects. Project proposals should contain

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<sup>3</sup>See IAEA document GOV/INF/2002/8/Mod.1.

<sup>4</sup> See INFCIRC/267.

<sup>5</sup> SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound — a commonly used framework for setting clear and results-oriented targets.

evidence that the support requested addresses common needs, is an identified regional priority, and is in line with the national development plans and priorities of the participating Member States.

12. Interregional projects can be trans-regional, set international standards, or enable the participation of candidates from developing countries in approved conferences, seminars, trainings and workshops. They can also be used for joint TC activities with an international entity. They contribute to wider knowledge and experience sharing among participating Member States and enhance technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC), South–South and Triangular Cooperation.
13. Given the limited resources of the Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF), projects are expected to be co-supported by Member States and/or development partners/donors. Member States are encouraged to increase their financial resources to their national programme through government cost-sharing. The source, nature and extent of support should be clearly indicated in the project document. Extrabudgetary contributions, such as government cost-sharing, are expected in particular to support large procurement items and should be clearly indicated in the project document.
14. Member States are advised to use the TCF allocation of the previous TC cycle as an indicative planning figure when budgeting TC projects for the upcoming cycle. Additional funding sources should be clearly identified for specific activities.
15. The IAEA has introduced a new and upgraded software system called the “Programme Cycle Management Framework+” ([PCMF+](#)), for the submission of Programme Notes and project proposals, as well as the elaboration of project designs. [PCMF+](#) system offers a flexible and modern user interface, enhanced information security measures, and improved functionality. While the Country Programme Notes (CPNs) for the 2028-2029 cycle will be submitted via the new [PCMF+](#) system, the legacy PCMF system will remain in use as necessary and as needed.

## **D. Roles and Responsibilities**

16. Member States are responsible for the selection of projects to be proposed to the Secretariat based on the CPFs and/or national development plans and existing RSPs. Only projects where well-developed, mature nuclear and nuclear-related techniques and technology hold a comparative advantage or complement conventional approaches will be considered.
17. Member States are responsible to identify the project counterpart institutions, with the adequate mandate and high-level commitment, as well as counterparts, regional project coordinators, project teams and partners, that are aligned with the priorities and objective of the project. Member States are encouraged to submit any relevant information, letters or documentation to demonstrate government support, ownership and sustainability. This includes ensuring that the selected institutions have the required physical and technical infrastructure, adequate human resources to implement the projects, have adequate safety infrastructure to ensure the safe use of the proposed technique under the project, and are supportive and committed to disseminating knowledge and the transferred technology at the national and regional level. Project counterparts should have good managerial skills and be capable of coordinating project development and implementation. They are encouraged to successfully complete the [LFA online training](#), preferably prior to commencing a design process. Project management tools are available on the [PCMF+](#).
18. Member States are responsible for progress monitoring and reporting, for the realization of outcomes, as well as ensuring sustainability of developed human resources and infrastructural capacity beyond the duration of the project. This includes identifying, analysing, mitigating and continuously monitoring risks that may affect project implementation and desired impact.

19. The Secretariat actively supports Member States in all aspects of project design, including ensuring technical integrity and relevance of proposed projects and that financial planning is in line with project content. The Secretariat is also responsible for appraising project designs against established quality criteria and ensuring that comprehensive and timely feedback on all submitted draft project designs is provided to Member States through the [PCMF+](#).
20. Good quality project designs are crucial for successful project implementation and monitoring. It is expected that Member States timely submit duly filled in draft project designs according to guidance provided in the [project document templates](#). Those draft designs will evolve to final projects with the Secretariat support. Further guidance, checklists, E-Learnings and tutorials are available on [PCMF+](#).
21. Duly completed project designs (all sections elaborated, including LFA and workplan) will be reviewed and assessed according to the [Guidelines for Quality Assessment of TC Project Designs](#).
22. Member States are reminded that the Board of Governors requires all Member States receiving technical assistance from the IAEA to have concluded a Revised Supplementary Agreement Concerning the Provision of Technical Assistance by the IAEA (RSA). In accordance with the terms of the RSA, Member States are responsible for obtaining the release from customs for goods and equipment supplied under the TC programme in a timely manner. This includes the payment of taxes, where applicable; the transportation of equipment from the port of entry to the project site; any incidental handling, storage, or other related expenses; insurance; and maintenance.
23. Projects that involve the delivery of radiation sources (sealed sources, unsealed radioactive material and radiation generators) or related equipment are reviewed by the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security to ensure that the projects meet the requirements of Article III.A.6 of the Statute, which states that the IAEA is authorized to provide for the application of standards of safety for protection of health and minimization of danger to life and property (including such standards for labour conditions) to its own operation as well as to the operations making use of materials, services, equipment, facilities, and information made available by the IAEA or at its request or under its control or supervision. At the operational level, this review also ensures compliance with the recommendations of the Board of Governors ([GOV/1999/67](#) and [GOV/2001/48](#)), according to which the provision of radiation sources or any equipment involving the use of radiation sources will be supported under the relevant projects only after the recipient country has met the principal requirements of the [International Basic Safety Standards](#) on the establishment of a national radiation safety infrastructure. Noting that the radiation safety infrastructure in a Member State can change positively or negatively throughout the implementation of a project, Member States are encouraged to consult and engage with their respective regulatory bodies on all projects that will involve the use of radiation sources and related equipment to ensure that the principal requirements of the International Basic Safety Standards are met.
24. The assessment of a Member State's radiation safety infrastructure status is based on the evaluation of information stored in the web-based Radiation Safety Information Management System ([RASIMS](#)) for all Thematic Safety Areas (TSA) except for TSA5 (Emergency Preparedness and Response), which is evaluated based on the information contained in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Information Management System ([EPRIMS](#)). For reasons of confidentiality, access to RASIMS is restricted so that Member States can only see their own national data. The information in RASIMS is sourced from both Member States and the Secretariat. It is in the interest of Member States to ensure that information in RASIMS is accurate and up to date, as it is the tool that is being used to evaluate the radiation safety infrastructure prior to a Member State receiving radiation sources or related equipment. It is also in the interest of Member States to ensure that information in EPRIMS is accurate and up to date, as it is the tool that is being used to evaluate the needs and priorities in emergency preparedness and response in the Member States.

25. Member States, with the exception of least developed countries, must pay National Participation Costs (NPCs) equivalent to 5% of the estimated core funding of the approved new national projects. At least half of the NPCs, equivalent to 2.5% of the core funding, must be paid before project implementation begins. Early payment of NPCs is essential to ensure effective and timely project implementation. However, the project start date should take into account the expected date of NPCs payment. For more details on NPCs please refer to [GOV/2004/46](#).

## **E. Project Planning and Development Process**

26. The planning and development process begins when the Secretariat issues a note verbale to the Member States, together with these Guidelines. Member States should then start internal discussions on topics and issues to be addressed through the TC programme during the 2028–2029 TC cycle. Member States are requested to refer to the CPF and/or national development plans in their internal project identification process, as well as the TC Programme Quality Criteria, according to the timeframe outlined in Section G. Member States are encouraged to engage all relevant stakeholders when developing proposals for the next TC cycle. A list of proposed projects using the CPN should be submitted through the [PCMF+](#) platform.

27. Regional and interregional project proposals can be submitted by any group of Member States within or outside an existing Regional/Cooperative Agreement bearing in mind the established TC Programme Quality Criteria, and after consultation with relevant regional/interregional stakeholders. Regional TC projects are also expected to make a clear contribution to the national development priorities of participating countries and will be appraised accordingly. The Secretariat, in close consultation with Member States, may also submit relevant regional and interregional projects based on information available to it on existing needs and trends.

28. The proposed programme for a Regional/Cooperative Agreement is submitted by the Chair of the respective Regional/Cooperative Agreement in accordance with the planning process and identified timeframe. These programmes, together with regional TC projects outside an agreement, will be consolidated by the relevant Regional Division to form the overall regional TC programmes. The Secretariat will also be responsible for consolidating the interregional TC projects into the overall interregional programme. The submission of the Country, Regional and Interregional Programme Notes (CPN, RPN, IPN) through the [PCMF+](#) platform initiates the project planning process. All stages of the project design provide time for interaction between Member States and the Secretariat.

29. It is expected that National Liaison Officers (NLOs), Programme Management Officers (PMOs), Technical Officers (TOs), Project Counterparts (CPs) and potential cooperation partners will work together on the design of selected projects from the initial list of concepts in the Programme Note taking into consideration the feedback provided by the Secretariat through [PCMF+](#). Member States are encouraged to draw on the Secretariat's services described in Section F below for support in the country programme and project preparation process. Feedback on designs will be provided to Member States by the Secretariat via the [PCMF+](#) platform. All project design document templates, with detailed guidance, can be found on [PCMF+](#).

## **F. Support and Services for Project Design**

30. As needed and as appropriate, the Secretariat will coordinate with Member States on the provision of support for project planning, designs and development, such as (1) assistance for development of CPFs and regional strategic profiles/frameworks, (2) upstream planning, (3) pre-project assistance, (4) assistance for results-based project development, (5) project design review meetings, (6) training and induction courses for new CPs/NLOs/National Liaison Assistants, and (7) assistance for resource mobilization efforts. A full description of all TC programme services is available on the [PCMF+](#).

31. The TC programme design phase is fully supported by the [PCMF+](#) platform, which facilitates a transparent planning and design process, and provides information and references on related services to support Member States in their programme design, notably on the [PCMF+](#). The [PCMF+](#) platform also facilitates interactions among all stakeholders.

## G. Timeframe for the Preparation of the 2028-2029TC Programme

Phase	Activity/Milestone	Responsibility	Deadline
Concept/ Programme Note Phase	Issuance of Guidelines (note verbale)	Secretariat	February 2026
	Submission of Country Programme Note (CPN), Regional and Interregional Programme Note (RPN/IPN) via <a href="#">PCMF+</a> platform	Member States	31 May 2026
	Feedback to Member States on CPN	Secretariat	30 June 2026
Design Phase	Engagement with Member States through TC Programme Services	Member States/ Secretariat	continuous
	Submission of draft, duly completed (all fields elaborated, including LFA and workplan), national/regional/interregional project designs via <a href="#">PCMF+</a> platform	Member States	31 August 2026
	Project Teams enhance draft designs	Member States/ Secretariat	continuous
	Initial technical and programmatic review finalized	Secretariat	15 January 2027
	First Quality Enhancement Exercise with feedback to project teams.	Secretariat	February 2027
	Project Teams integrate feedback from first quality review into project design	Member States/ Secretariat	31 March 2027
	Second Quality Enhancement Exercise with feedback to project teams	Secretariat	April 2027
	All project designs finalized and submitted via <a href="#">PCMF+</a> platform	Member States	17 May 2027
	National programme acknowledgement	Member States	9 July 2027
Approval Phase	Clearance of proposed TC programme	Secretariat	30 July 2027
	Issuance of TC programme documents to Member States	Secretariat	October 2027
	Review of TC programme by the Technical Assistance and Cooperation Committee (TACC)	Member States	November 2027
	Approval of TC programme by the Board of Governors (BoG)	Member States	November 2027
	Information to Member States on approved National Programme	Secretariat	December 2027