

**Ready Reference: Quarterly & Annual Project Review and Planning Meetings**

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| **INSTRUCTIONS**  This ready reference document is a tool for the project manager (PM) or chief of party (CoP) to get the most out of project team review and planning meetings. These meetings are a major investment of a critical project resource: staff time. Too often, however, meetings fail to generate the analyses and decisions needed for effective project management, often as the result of inadequate planning. This document, used together with Compass guidance for [Standard 11, key action 4](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard11/keyaction4), the project learning plan and [CRS MEAL Procedure 2.4](https://crsorg.sharepoint.com/sites/Monitoring-Evaluation-Accountability-and-Learning/SitePages/Policy2_Monitoring.aspx), will help PMs/CoPs to:   * Prepare for effective cross-discipline quarterly and annual project meetings of CRS and partner staff, including compiling the appropriate data and materials, and thoughtfully planning the meeting agenda to maximize participant engagement. * Ensure the meeting addresses the key topics and information that will allow the project team to make timely, informed decisions and to identify appropriate follow-up actions.   **Review this document as you start your planning, to ensure you know what to prepare and can therefore allocate sufficient time for that preparation**. Keep in mind that “[telescoping](http://compass.crs.org/introduction/about-compass#telescop)” is key: all meetings should cover all topics listed, but the time allocated to each topic will differ by project. Use your best judgment and adapt.  ***Note:*** *The document includes links to relevant standards and key actions from the CRS Project Management Standards, cited using a shorthand reference (e.g., Standard 11, key action 3=S11KA3).* |

**Preparation checklist: Quarterly and annual project review and planning meetings**

* **Initiate meeting planning at least one month before the meeting date**, by reviewing the **“**Before the meeting” guidance from [Standard 11, key action](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard11/keyaction4) 4 (S11KA4) on Compass. **Set aside extra time to prepare for the first project quarterly meeting and for each annual review and planning meeting** (annual meetings include additional participants and cover more topics).
* Per step 2 in the [S11KA](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard11/keyaction4)4 “Before the meeting” guidance, meet with project MEAL staff to review MEAL data needs for the meeting (updated IPTT, data visualizations, project learning plan, etc.) and identify key points and issues for interpretation during the meeting; check on the status of these activities at least two weeks before the meeting.
* Adapt the list of quarterly or annual meeting discussion points below to incorporate other relevant points.
* Depending on the meeting’s location, duration, number of participants, and any wrap-around meetings scheduled (e.g., a project learning/reflection event), check in as needed with project team members responsible for meeting logistics to finalize all arrangements (transport, accommodation, meals, meeting room set-up, equipment and materials, etc.). **Remember to schedule additional days for the annual review meeting, as it will include a deeper level of reflection and analysis as well as development of the detailed implementation plan (DIP) for the subsequent year.**

**Discussion points: Quarterly project review and planning meetings**

**Project detailed implementation plan (DIP)**

* **Review activities carried out versus the project DIP** **for the quarter**; discuss any activities that were not completed and the reasons why; discuss as well as the reasons for carrying out any unplanned activities.

**Project MEAL data and trends**

* **Reflect on project monitoring data**, including quantitative and qualitative data and data on beneficiary satisfaction with project support. Use the prompt questions from the project learning plan, and reflect on the key points and issues identified during meeting preparation for deeper project team interpretation, as well as staff observations and field notes (see [S11KA3](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard11/keyaction3)).
* **Review community feedback received** from both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries to determine trends in feedback and check on the project’s response rate to feedback.
* **Review progress against project indicators** and analyze areas of over- or under-achievement against plans and targets. This should include a review of achievement against any indicators related to capacity and any other aspects of the project’s sustainability and exit plan.
* **Analyze project data** to **identify unintended changes** and **check whether** **critical assumptions continue to hold.** *(Note: Critical assumptions that do not hold are likely to be project risks or issues and should be analyzed accordingly – see “Project operating environment, risks, and issues” below).* Refer to the project learning plan from the project to guide this reflection and update the prompt questions for the next meeting as needed to address new and emerging issues.

**Project technical feedback**

* Review and discuss any **findings and recommendations from visits** during the quarter by regional or global **technical advisors and/or consultants**.
* **Review any pending follow-up** from past technical support/review visits, including any visits by donor technical staff.

**Project financial management**

* **Review project spending** in light of the DIP review and achievement of indicator targets (see [S13KA2](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard13/keyaction2) – the detailed project financial review may have been conducted in an earlier budget comparison report review meeting; bring the summary from that review and any updated information to the quarterly meeting).

**Project human resource management**

* **Review project human resource issues** (current vacancies, upcoming staffing transitions or gaps, additional staffing needs – see [S14KA4](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard14/keyaction4)) and any action needed.

**Project supply chain management, including procurement**

* **Review the project procurement plan** and status and **other supply chain management plans and activities** (see [S12KA1](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard12/keyaction1)).

**Project operating environment, risks, and issues**

* **Review the project operating environment**, identify actual or anticipated changes, and analyze how they may affect project progress and outcomes.
* **Review the project risk register and issues log** (see [S11KA](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard11/keyaction2)2), discuss any updates needed to risk assessments, and review, establish, and/or update risk management and issue resolution strategies.
* **Identify** **project risks and/or issues which require additional discussion** with CRS senior management, the project governance structure, and IDEA donor engagement staff as applicable (see [S15KA2](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard15/keyaction2)).
* **Update the project risk register and issues log** (or document updates to be made following the meeting) based on the above discussion.

**Donor engagement and accountability**

* **Review** **donor engagement actions** (for relationship strengthening and positioning, with current and potential donors), including a review of the project donor engagement plan (see [S10KA4](http://compass.crs.org/startup/standard10/keyaction4)).
* Identify **project successes or key learning to highlight** with the project donor or other potential donors, in upcoming reports or other methods of engagement (see [S11KA](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard11/keyaction1)1).
* For externally-funded projects only: **Review** any **donor feedback** on reports submitted since the last quarterly meeting, along with **information requirements for the next report.**
* For externally-funded projects only: Discuss any **changes to donor regulations or requirements.**

**Next quarter planning, including updating the DIP and budget**

* **Review any follow-up action items from the previous meeting that were not incorporated in the DIP**; discuss progress and challenges in completing those actions.
* **Discuss any new or non-routine activities scheduled for the upcoming quarter** (e.g., roll-out of a new strategy or set of activities, a pilot, initiation of project activities in a new geographic area, formal evaluations or reviews, project visits, etc.), and any technical assistance or special needs associated with those activities.
* **Update the following documents** (or identify updates that the PM/CoP or an agreed team member will make after the meeting)**:** 
  + **Quarterly DIP**, including technical assistance, MEAL and risk and issue management activities (see guidance on DIP development in [S7KA3](http://compass.crs.org/startup/standard7/keyaction3)).
  + **Project supply chain management plans,** including procurement plans (see [S12KA1](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard12/keyaction1) for details).
  + **Project donor engagement plan** (see [S10KA4](http://compass.crs.org/startup/standard10/keyaction4)).
* **Document updates needed to the project cash forecast** based on the updated DIP, including supporting partners to forecast cash needs for next period (see [S13KA1](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard13/keyaction1)).
* **Identify any proposed changes to the DIP or budget that may require discussion with and/or approval from the project governance structure and/or donor** (discuss with country program senior management, the project governance structure, and IDEA staff as applicable following the meeting– see [S15KA2](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard15/keyaction2)).
* **Document any other items requiring follow-up that are not appropriate for the project DIP**.

**Discussion points: Annual project review and planning meetings**[[1]](#footnote-2)

**Project DIP**

* **Review activities carried out versus the quarterly project DIP**; discuss any activities that were not completed and the reasons why, as well as the reasons for carrying out any unplanned activities.
* **Analyze overall project progress against the annual DIP,** including big-picture analysis of schedule management challenges, and actual versus anticipated activities.

**Project MEAL – data, trends, and annual MEAL system review**

* **Reflect on project monitoring data**, particularly trends over time, beneficiary satisfaction and key points and issues identified during meeting preparation for wider project team interpretation. Use the questions in the project learning plan to guide reflection.
* **Review and interpret community feedback and response** to identify any underlying issues and ensure the project is responsive to feedback received. Discuss any information about the accessibility of feedback mechanisms to the full range of community members.
* **Review progress against project baselines and targets, especially intermediate result and strategic objective-level indicators,** and analyze areas of over- or under-achievement.
* **Analyze project data to** **identify unintended changes** and **check whether** **critical assumptions continue to hold.** *(Note: Critical assumptions that do not hold are likely to be project risks or issues and should be analyzed accordingly – see “Project operating environment, risks, and issues” below.)* Use prompt questions in the project learning plan to reflect on these data; update these questions to indicate areas for further investigation as needed.
* **Reflect on project learning**, both formal learning activities(see [S11KA](http://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard11/keyaction1)1) as well as including learning from **project efforts to address programming and operations-related implementation challenges** identified during the past year’s quarterly review and planning meetings.
* For projects 24 months or longer: **Review the results of annual data quality assessments** (see MEAL [Procedure 2.4](https://global.crs.org/communities/ME/MEAL/SitePages/monitoring.aspx)).
* **Review the overall project MEAL system** to ensure that it is generating useful information for decision-making, at the right time, and **identify any adjustments needed** (see [EMECA’s tools for MEAL system review](https://crsorg.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/PMImprovement/Compass%20Content%20for%20CRS%20only/EMECA%20MEAL%20System%20Review%20Tools?csf=1&web=1&e=Qx4R8I)). Consider additional areas for further probing in MEAL data based on project learning to date.

**Project stakeholder engagement, sustainability and exit plans**

* **Identify any necessary adjustments** to project efforts to **engage key project stakeholders**.
* **Review progress toward project sustainability and exit plans** and identify improvements needed (including actions for integration in the annual DIP), keeping in mind available information about project progress toward IR and SO-level changes.

**Project technical feedback**

* Review and discuss any **pending findings and recommendations from visits** during the quarter by regional or global **technical advisors and/or consultants**.
* **Review trends in observations and recommendations** from technical support/review visits.

**Project financial management**

* **Review project spending** in light of the DIP review and achievement of indicator targets, **focusing on annual and inception to date analysis** (see [S13KA2](http://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard13/keyaction2) – the detailed project financial review may have been conducted in an earlier budget comparison report review meeting; bring the summary from that review and any updated information to the annual meeting).

**Project human resource management**

* **Review project human resource issues** (current vacancies, anticipated staffing transitions or gaps in the coming year, additional staffing needs – see [S14KA4](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard14/keyaction4)) and any action needed.

**Project supply chain management, including procurement**

* **Review the project procurement plan** and status and **other supply chain management plans and activities** and new considerations for the coming year (see [S12KA1](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard12/keyaction1)).

**Donor engagement and accountability and compliance issues**

* **Reflect on successes and gaps in donor engagement during the project year,** and identify opportunities to leverage project successes or key learning for donor engagement in the coming year.
* For externally-funded projects only: **Review any donor feedback** on reports submitted since the last quarterly meeting, and discuss overall trends in donor feedback (reports, visits, meetings) in the year.

**Project operating environment, risks and issues**

* **Review the project operating environment**, identify actual or anticipated changes, and analyze how they may affect project progress and outcomes.
* For externally-funded projects only: **Discuss** any **bigger-picture** **project donor compliance issues or risks** considering donor and project trends.
* **Review the project risk register and issues log** (see [S11KA](https://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard11/keyaction2)2), discuss any updates needed to risk assessments, and review, establish, and/or update risk management and issue resolution strategies.
* **Analyze the effectiveness of risk and issues management** **and resolution strategies** during the year.

**Project team collaboration, cross-learning, and partner capacity strengthening**

* **Review the quality of project team (CRS and partner) collaboration and cross-learning**, and identify actions to strengthen the same.
* **Review progress against the project capacity strengthening plan for CRS and partner staff** (see [S6KA4](http://compass.crs.org/startup/standard6/keyaction4)) and analyze the quality of capacity strengthening provided.
* **Identify any additional capacity strengthening needs for CRS and partners**, along with potential options to address these needs (keeping in mind project resource limitations).

**Next quarter and annual planning**

* **Discuss any new or non-routine activities scheduled for the upcoming year and technical assistance or special needs for the same**, with a focus on such activities planned for the following quarter.
* **Develop the next year’s detailed implementation plan**, including MEAL and risk and issue management activities (see [S7KA3](http://compass.crs.org/startup/standard7/keyaction3) for detailed guidance on DIP development).
* **Document updates needed to the project cash forecast** based on the DIP, including supporting partners to forecast cash needs for next period (see [S13KA1](http://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard13/keyaction1)).
* **Update project supply chain management plans**, including procurement plans, for the coming year.
* **Update the project donor engagement plan for the coming project year** (e.g., refine key messages or donor relationship strengthening objectives, identify new donors for project outreach, etc.).
* **Identify any issues or proposed changes that may require donor approval or discussion** (for further discussion with IDEA staff as applicable – see [S15KA2](http://compass.crs.org/implementation/standard15/keyaction2)).
* **Document any other items requiring follow-up that are not appropriate for the project DIP.**

1. In addition to the programming and operations staff from the CRS and partner project team who typically participate in quarterly review meetings, the annual review meeting should include members of the project governance structure (see [Standard 6, key action 5](http://compass.crs.org/startup/standard6/keyaction5)), CRS and partner senior management, and additional country program MEAL staff. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)