

Role of the AEWA Technical Committee in the evaluation and quality control of AEWA international projects (drafted by Jesper Madsen)

Project evaluation and review working group

The Technical Committee was established by the Agreement (Article VIIa) to:

- (a) “provide scientific and technical advice and information to the Meeting of Parties and, through the Agreement secretariat, to the Parties;
- (b) “make recommendations to the Meeting of Parties concerning the Action Plan, implementation of the Agreement and further research to be carried out...”

To this end, it has responsibility to review research and conservation activity endorsed or funded by the Agreement, in order to maintain high standards and to ensure the fulfilment of strategic priorities.

This involves input at a number of stages, from the development of high quality proposals for funding, through standard project management procedures of funded projects, to consistency in their reporting and eventual conservation implementation.

The Technical Committee should maintain awareness of the CMS initiative to develop performance indicators, and it should seek to ensure that each funded project has outputs/outcomes that are measurable in terms of these indicators. There may be benefit in considering indicators that are specific to AEWA and linked to those of CMS.

1. Project initiation

The Technical Committee should work with the Secretariat in the development of project proposals so as to ensure that proposals submitted for funding are of strategic importance for the attainment of AEWA objectives and of high scientific standards. To this end, specifications for work contracted by the Secretariat would benefit from standard contract elements, including:

- the explicit relevance of the work to the overall AEWA objectives;
- the assessment of the feasibility of the project objectives;
- the clear specification of the range and type of anticipated outputs (differently targeted at a range of audiences/user-groups);
- the need for projects to deliver outputs in a form that allows publication on the AEWA web-site with minimal further technical modification and input of the Secretariat; and
- awareness of the standard criteria for post-project evaluation (below).

In providing research/project oversight (and to aid the limited staffing available within the Secretariat), specific members (according to their expertise) of the Technical Committee should be nominated to be responsible for providing technical oversight for each of the projects funded by the Agreement. For large projects, this may involve sitting on Steering Committees or other such routine project management mechanisms.

It would accordingly be useful to draw-up a register of expertise available within the Technical Committee.

2. Project management

Nominated members of the Technical Committee should be involved in providing guidance to funded projects, especially for those with a high technical content or complexity.

During the execution of each project, these nominated individuals will be responsible together with the Secretariat, for providing feedback to the full Committee at regular intervals (including between formal meetings as opportunities arise).

3. Project reporting

Project outputs should be directed at a range of different user-groups (e.g. decision-makers; public; scientific community etc.). This should involve outputs in a range of different media as appropriate (e.g. AEWA web-site; scientific literature etc.)

Projects with scientific outputs are recommended to be routinely reported to the scientific community, including in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. This facilitates the maintenance of high scientific standards.

At the end of each project, the Technical Committee will evaluate the conclusions and outputs.

Further to its terms of reference (AEWA Article VII), the Committee should report on the evaluation of funded projects to each Meeting of Parties.

4. Post-project evaluation

AEWA funded projects should always be subject to critical post-project evaluation. This should be undertaken to standard criteria and address issues of:

- problems of practical implementation; and
- 'lessons learnt' and recommendations for future related activity.

A summary of all such post-project evaluations should be routinely included as an element of the Technical Committee's reporting to each Meeting of Parties.

5. Revision of implementation priorities

The Technical Committee should play a significant role in monitoring the Agreement's implementation priorities, and in advising the Meeting of Parties on future revisions.

This activity will benefit from the Committee's closer engagement with oversight of funded-projects as outlined above.