



Community of Practice

IT Project Management

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How to receive and respond to a quality assurance provider's readiness assessment

Introduction

Projects under WaTech oversight are required to use a quality assurance (QA) provider to measure the effectiveness of the project's management strategies.

One of the QA provider's deliverables is a QA readiness assessment that measures the ability of the agency, the project team, and its stakeholders to achieve planned project outcomes. These assessments generally take two to eight weeks to complete.

Benefits

Readiness assessments:

- Provide an independent assessment of the project's charter, project management plan and technology budget.
- Provide suggestions to improve project design.
- Identify project strengths and areas that need attention (e.g., project leadership).
- Evaluate the project's anticipated list of risks and issues and provide targeted recommendations to mitigate risks and avoid issues.
- Apply an experienced perspective to the project's planned work, approach, and strategy.
- Identify resources or potential contacts in other organizations that have completed projects of similar size and complexity. Contacts can help with planning and problem solving.
- Provide a way to collaborate with executive-level stakeholders as risk advisors who may have a different vantage point than that of other project participants.
- Improve the project quality assurance plan.
- Reviews project deliverables for quality and adherence to specifications.

Leading practices

Taking the time to thoroughly review and respond to QA provider findings and recommendations is an essential role for project managers.

The following are leading practices for project managers:

1. **Read and understand [Policy PM-03](#)** (previously Policy 132). The project manager should understand how [Policy PM-03 Quality Assurance](#) and its related set of standards and guidelines (PM-03-01-S, PM-03-02-S, PM-03-03-S, PM-03-01-G) govern project QA requirements.
2. **Provide the QA provider a robust list of stakeholders to interview:** Candidates should include the oversight consultant, executive sponsor, business owners, IT owners, and subject experts. Some stakeholders may speak more openly with a third party.
3. **Facilitate collaboration with the QA provider:**
 - a. **Meet regularly:** Talk to the QA provider about what they're seeing and learning from stakeholders, team members and executives. Ask for recommendations in real-time and respond to them immediately when possible. Doing so will potentially head off new or repeat findings and recommendations.
 - b. **Optimize time:** Ask the QA provider to make recommendations about where they should focus their attention and how they can best contribute to the project.
 - c. **Encourage candor:** Ask your QA provider if they are holding anything back. QA should be providing recommendations that challenge the project manager to make improvements, think creatively, and respond to findings with confidence.
 - d. **Share QA findings with other stakeholders:** Provide an opportunity for QA to share their readiness assessment findings with the project team and steering committee.
4. **Take QA provider recommendations seriously:**
 - a. **Assume positive intent:** Recognize that recommendations are intended to promote project success, not highlight individual failings.
 - b. **Respond with brevity, completeness, and timeliness:** Responses to QA findings should be similar to an action plan and briefly describe the who, what, and when. The action plan approach will help project managers to estimate work effort, reduce risk, limit repeat recommendations (month over month), and achieve project objectives.
 - c. **Negotiate disagreements with QA and sponsor:** It's ok to disagree with the QA provider. Sometimes a project manager, sponsor, or business owner will disagree with a finding or recommendation and project managers should be ready to review quickly and negotiate necessary adjustments. Challenging QA to think about things differently or providing them with additional information can make a difference in overall project status and may prevent repetition in subsequent reports.
5. **Work to remove repeated findings and recommendations:** Writing responses can be especially tedious if QA findings and recommendations remain the same month after month. If this occurs, research why the same findings and recommendations persist. Work with the OCIO consultant and project management partner for a fresh perspective and ask for advice on your agency's responses.