PROJECT DESIGN QUALITY ASSESSMENT

This Project Design Quality Assessment is a rapid review *checklist* of a project's essential elements — for use by reviewers and managers at various stages in the project design process.

It consists of Five (5) related *sub-checklists* which address various aspects:

A. Narrative Summary	***(Framework)***
B. Assumptions & Risks	***(Framework)***
C. Indicators & Targets	***(Framework)***
D. Monitoring Mechanisms	***(Framework)***
E. Policy Perspective	***(Rationale)***

The first four checklists deal with the project's building blocks — *expressly outlined in the project framework summary* — while the fifth addresses the proposed project's overall coherence and cohesiveness from a policy perspective.

Checklists can never *supplant* sound technical considerations and judgment. However, the conscientious application of systematic documentation in checklist form can *supplement* the project approval process — by providing reassurance to managers and executives at various levels, while simultaneously substantiating sector professional predilections.

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Check ✔ in the columns below			A. NARRATIVE SUMMARY — *Key Criteria for Levels and Linkages*		
Yes	Some	No	Item	**CHECKLIST** *[All Items should be "Yes"]*	**GUIDANCE**
			A. SPECIFIC LEVELS		
			1	**GOAL: The Long Term Objective — i.e. project "Vision" — is stated; not something that the project will be expected to achieve alone during its lifetime.**	**A single project is not the sole means for attaining the Goal; it only contributes towards a Goal level *indirectly*.** Several other Country &/or Sector projects are usually needed to support the same Goal-Level Objective.
			2	**PURPOSE: The improved situation for the target beneficiaries — *i.e. after the project has satisfactorily completed (or delivered) the Outputs to alleviate a perceived problem* — is summarized. *[I.e. The Purpose is the immediate reason Why the project is being undertaken; NOT What the project is going to do.]***	**The Purpose should describe what is expected to be *different* After the Outputs have been delivered by the project; NOT what the project is going to do!** Often a fundamental *change in behavior* by the targeted beneficiaries — &/or the institutions serving them — is anticipated. At other times the change desired may be new modes of service delivery, an increase in the *quality* of existing modes (i.e. improved *effectiveness)*; or simply greater service outreach to a different sub-set of target beneficiaries. **NOTE:** A Common Error: *"Institutional Strengthening", "Capacity Building", and "Increasing Access"* are ***Not* Purposes**, but rather are *Activities*, which — when completed — will become project *Outputs*.
			3	**PURPOSE: The Project has not more than two Immediate Objectives.**	**Ideally, the project should have only a single Purpose.** During early planning and design, various stakeholders often have different (and frequently conflicting) objectives. However, if these objectives are not satisfactorily reconciled and limited, multiple project objectives may make it difficult to define "Success", which in turn will limit ability to subsequently measure project performance, and/or evaluate project impact.
			4	**OUTPUTS: The key component categories are stated as *Results* that can be produced / delivered during project implementation.**	**Outputs are the project's "deliverables". They summarize what the project is contractually accountable to provide.** "Institutions Strengthened", "Capacity Built", "Access Increased", "Roads / Houses / Clinics / Schools / Irrigation Systems Constructed", "Hectares Planted", "New Procedures Developed", "New Systems Operational", "Personnel Trained" etc., are examples of general categories of Outputs that a Project might provide.
			5	**ACTIVITIES: The key tasks, steps, or stages to be undertaken by the project are listed.**	**Activities are what the project will do.** Several key Activities should be identified for every project Output. "Mobilize Equipment & Personnel", "Conduct Survey", "Design System", "Construct Facilities", "Train Personnel", "Prepare Report", etc., are all examples of Activities that a Project might undertake.
			6	**INPUTS: The various resource categories required to undertake the project are identified.**	**Inputs are the project's resources.** Select from the following standard categories, as appropriate: "Consultants (International & / or Local)", "Equipment, Software &/or Training", "Civil Works", "Counterpart Funding and Project Management (Cash &/or Kind)"; "Beneficiary Participation (Cash &/or Kind)"; "Private Sector Contributions (Cash &/or Kind)"; and "Other Donor Contributions".
			B. STYLE & SUBSTANCE		
			7	**UNIQUE: Each statement is the only one of its kind in the Framework.**	**Each Level should address a different aspect.** No statement should be repeated — or rephrased — at higher or lower levels.
			8	**SOLITARY: There may be more than one sentence at any Level, but each sentence only describes a *single item*.**	**There should be no run-on conjunctions.** *"And", "as well as",* & *"also"* indicate additional "peer" items — i.e. at the same level. These warrant a *separate sentence*. *"Through"* or *"by means of"* implies an ends→means relationship. Consequently what follows should be at a *lower* level. *"In order to"* signals a means→ends relationship. Consequently what follows should be placed at a *higher* level.
			9	**QUALITATIVE: The statements at each level are purely descriptive.**	**General qualitative trends** — i.e. "Improve", "Increase", "More", "Better", etc., can be included in the narrative summary statement to highlight the conceptual trend, **but *Not* numbers.** [Numbers should be reserved for the Indicators & Targets (i.e. 2nd) Column.]
			C. LINKAGES BETWEEN LEVELS		
			10	**Each Level in the hierarchy: *Inputs* → *Activities* → *Outputs* → *Purpose (Immediate Objectives)* → *Goals (Long Term Objectives)* contributes to the next higher Level.**	**Verify the vertical logic** — both **"Bottom-Up"** and **"Top-Down"**. **Bottom Up:** Ask ***Why*** a particular level is being done. The answer should be ***"In order to attain the immediate higher Level".*** This is also called a *"means-ends"* process because each level should be the "means" for attaining the next higher level "end". **Top Down:** Ask ***How*** a particular level can be attained. The answer should be ***"By successful completion of the immediate lower Level".***
			Column TOTALS		

Check ✔ in the columns below			B. ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS — *Key Criteria*		
Yes	Some	No	Item	**CHECKLIST** *[All Items should be "Yes"]*	**GUIDANCE**
			A. CONCEPT, SUBSTANCE & STYLE		
			1	**CONCEPT: Only Assumptions and Risks beyond the control of the Project — *but essential to its Success* — are cited.**	**Key assumptions and risks should be stated — as realistically as possible — and identified as to whether it is *predominantly* positive (i.e. an Assumption) or negative (i.e. a Risk).** Often, Assumptions and Risks reflect support &/or follow-through actions by selected target groups, or changes in behavior; as well as new procedures by target beneficiaries. Assumptions in the usual sense of technical "givens" "rates", "ratios" or other criteria for estimating project inputs — such as assuming . . . "a minimum caloric intake of 1,500 per person per day", "an internal rate of return of at least 1.15", "an average family of 5", "a health center within 15 minutes walking distance of residence", "two planting cycles per year" etc., etc. — are *Not* appropriate. Furthermore, Assumptions / Risks within the scope of normal Project Management implementation responsibility — such as "Timely availability of funding" "Timely availability of contractors" "No delays in procurement" — should not be listed.
			2	**RISKS: Every identified Risk is prefaced with an "R:" for easy identification.**	A contingency plan should be prepared to mitigate the impact of every Risk. [Contingency plans are not included in the framework.]
			3	**UNIQUE: Each statement is the only one of its kind in the Framework.**	Assumptions and Risk statements are only made once in the Framework — at the *lowest* Level. They should not be repeated — or rephrased — at other, higher, levels.
			4	**SOLITARY: Each statement only describes a single item.** [However there may be more than one item at any Level.]	There should be no run-on conjunctions. *"and", "as well as",* & *"also"* indicate additional items at the same level. Each Assumption and Risk warrants a separate statement, as it will be monitored separately.
			B. LINKAGES BETWEEN LEVELS		
			5	**Assumptions and Risks in the hierarchy: *Inputs ➔ Activities ➔ Outputs ➔ Purpose (Immediate Objectives) ➔ Goals (Long Term Objectives)* relate to the Project Design Summary *at the next higher Level*.**	Pre-identified Key Assumptions and Risks should be identified and stated at various Levels in the Framework in a "Stair-stepping" mode. The linkage between the "Design Summary" and "Assumptions" columns, and the next higher level should be verified in terms of an *"If-And-Then"* relationship. The *"If-And-Then"* concept is essentially as follows: *If* the Design Summary is achieved, *And* the Assumptions at that same level are realized — in the absence of any pre-identified Risks occurring — *Then* the pre-conditions will have been met for successful Performance at the next Level. *[i.e. Assumptions at the Activity level are pre-requisites to attaining the Output, while pre-identified Risks that occur would preclude attainment unless successfully mitigated.]*
			C. SPECIFIC LEVELS		
			6	**GOAL: Assumptions and Risks at the Goal Level (if any) relate to the higher level Country Strategy Program.**	In the absence of any pre-identified Risk — successful Performance at the Goal Level, plus any Goal Level Assumptions should support ADB Country Strategic Objectives.
			7	**PURPOSE: Assumptions and Risks at the Purpose Level relate to the Goal Level.**	In the absence of any pre-identified Risk — successful Performance at the Purpose Level, plus any Purpose Level Assumptions should contribute towards attainment of the Project's Long Term (Goal) Objectives.
			8	**OUTPUTS: Assumptions and Risks at the Output Level relate to the Purpose Level.**	In the absence of any pre-identified Risk — successful completion of the Outputs, plus any Output Level Assumptions should be necessary and sufficient conditions to expect attainment of the Project Immediate (Purpose) Objectives in the near future.
			9	**ACTIVITIES: Assumptions and Risks at the Activities Level relate to the Output Level.**	In the absence of any pre-identified Risk — successful Performance of the Activities, plus any Activity Level Assumptions should be sufficient to accomplish the Project Outputs.
			10	**INPUTS: Assumptions and Risks at the Input Level relate to the Activities Level.**	In the absence of any pre-identified Risk — availability of the Inputs, plus realization of any Input Level Assumptions should be sufficient to proceed with the Project Activities.
			Column TOTALS		

Check ✔ in the columns below			C. INDICATORS & TARGETS — *Key Criteria*		
Yes	Some	No	Item	**CHECKLIST** *[All Items should be "Yes"]*	**GUIDANCE**
			A. LINKAGES ACROSS LEVELS		
			1	**INDICATORS: Every statement in the Design Summary Column has *at least one* measurable Indicator.**	**Indicators are the pre-selected *means* to measure performance of items in the Design Summary Column (Column 1) of the Framework.** Indicators should have "face validity" (i.e. they should seem appropriate to the situation), be measurable, relatively easy to collect the data, as well as provide reliable results on a timely basis. Where direct measurement indicators are impractical, indirect "Proxy" indicators should be used. The measurement *unit* should be specified for each indicator — i.e. "Km Road Constructed" "Number of Hectares Planted" "Average Score Attained" "Percentage of Families Below the Poverty Line" "Benefit:Cost Ratio", etc. Where indicators cannot be quantified, numerical / subjective rating scales, (with criteria for each scale level) should be specified, developed and utilized.
			2	**MULTIPLE INDICATORS: There may be more than one Indicator for each Design Summary statement.**	
			3	**TARGETS: Every indicator has a target (or pre-determined Standard) that is measurable in terms of Quantity &/or Quality, and Time.**	**A target is the pre-determined success level for an indicator.** While generally descriptive trends — such as "Improve" "Increase" "More" "Better" etc., — are acceptable in the descriptive Design Summary (Column 1), such generalities are inadequate for performance measurement in Column 2. Every indicator should have a corresponding target. Every indicator should have a baseline &/or a pre-determined standard, for subsequent comparison of performance. Every target level / standard should be reasonably precise so as to permit unambiguous measurement.
			B. SUBSTANCE & STYLE		
			4	**UNIQUE: Each indicator is the only one of its kind in the Framework.**	Each Level is intended to address a different aspect. Thus indicators should not be repeated — or rephrased — at higher or lower levels.
			5	**FORMAT: Every Indicator has sufficient descriptive and quantitative (or qualitative) data to permit subsequent performance measurement and comparison, by independent monitoring and evaluation personnel.**	While not essential in every situation, the following format is a guide to indicator and target definition: Quantitative "Increase (*Indicator kkk*) at least: *x* %, from: *XX* units (baseline) to: *YY* units, by: *ZZ* (date) Qualitative "Improve (*Indicator kkk*) from: *XX* satisfaction level (baseline) to: *YY* satisfaction level *[on a xx-point scale]* by: *ZZ* (date)
			C. SPECIFIC LEVELS		
			6	**GOAL: The desired long term sustainable impacts are stated.**	Goal impacts are only likely to occur a considerable time after the project Purpose has been attained. Goal impacts are usually only indirectly related (and only partially attributable) to the project Purpose.
			7	**PURPOSE: The desired improvement in the situation (i.e. the effects) as a result of the project are stated.**	Purpose Indicators and Targets reflect changes in processes, results, and/or behavior by target beneficiaries that are expected shortly after the project Outputs have been delivered. NOTE: Purpose-level targets are generally unattainable during project Implementation, except where the project has a series of incremental pre-determined end objectives. Cause-Effect linkage between Outputs and Purpose should be measurable. The Purpose level attainment should be directly attributable to the project Outputs (and Assumptions at the Output level).
			8	**OUTPUTS: The Outputs are all expected to be completed by the end of the project.**	Outputs are deliverables, and are all within the control of the project. Together with the Assumptions at the Output level, the Project Outputs should be both Necessary and Sufficient to accomplish the Project Purpose.
			9	**ACTIVITIES: The project implementation schedule and responsibilities are identified.**	Activity indicators use the following format, and/or cite the essential data: Start: *(Date)* Complete: *(Date)* Responsibility: *(Organizational Unit,&/or Individual)*
			10	**INPUTS: Indicators and Targets are all expressed in terms of money, &/or level of effort.**	Round-off Monetary values (i.e. Millions, Thousands, etc.,) Express Level of effort in Person / (Man) - Months
			Column TOTALS		

Check ✔ in the columns below			D MONITORING MECHANISMS — *Key Criteria*		
Yes	Some	No	Item	**CHECKLIST** *[All Items should be "Yes"]*	**GUIDANCE**
			A. LINKAGES ACROSS LEVELS		
			1	**Every Indicator has a least one source of data, or means for collecting it.**	**Monitoring mechanisms are *either* established sources of data for the Indicators and Targets, *or* the means (and frequency) for collecting the data.**
			2	**MULTIPLE USE: The same source, or means for collecting data is cited for some indicators at different levels.**	The same source, or means for collecting data, can be used for more than one Indicator; even at different levels.
			B. SUBSTANCE & STYLE		
			3	**SUCCINCTNESS: The Monitoring Mechanism is only a brief description.**	It is not necessary to go into great detail on Monitoring Mechanisms.
			4	**MULTIPLE SOURCES: More than one source is cited for some indicators**	The same source, or means for collecting data, can be used for more than one Indicator.
			5	**VERIFICATION: Monitoring Mechanisms either exist, or have been planned and budgeted.**	**Ensure that the source, or means for collecting data actually exists — either with the EA or the ADB.** If not, make provision for collecting data by including funding in a line Activity &/or Output for a Project Survey; or developing an EA Management Information System under the project.
			C. SPECIFIC LEVELS		
			6	**GOAL: The source and/or means for collecting data is beyond the project, and is already institutionalized.**	**The Goal will not be attained until a considerable time after the project has been completed.** Thus, the data source, and means for collecting the data cannot be supported by the project. External International Multilateral Donors (i.e. World Bank, UN), or National level EA statistical sources are often appropriate.
			7	**PURPOSE: The source and/or means for collecting data is beyond the project.**	**The Purpose is project-specific, but it will usually only be accomplished some time after the project has been completed.** Thus, the data source, and means for collecting the data cannot be supported by ADB after the project. Consequently provision should be made during the life of the project for development of appropriate EA Management Information Systems, and/or follow-up special surveys to continue monitoring and progress reporting after project completion.
			8	**OUTPUTS: The source and/or means for collecting data is within the project control.**	Outputs are a direct project management responsibility. Consequently, the data sources and means for collecting the data should be within the project.
			9	**ACTIVITIES: The source and/or means for collecting data is within the project control.**	Activities are a direct project management responsibility. Consequently, the data sources and means for collecting the data should be within the project.
			10	**INPUTS: The source and/or means for collecting data is within the project control.**	Inputs are a direct project management responsibility. Consequently, the data sources and means for collecting the data should be within the project.
			Column TOTALS		

PROJECT DESIGN SUMMARY MATRIX CHECKLIST (A➔D) SIGN-OFF:

Prepared by:_____
Position & Organization:_____
_____
Date:_____

Reviewed & Approved by:_____
Position & Organization:_____
_____
Date:_____

Check ✔ in the columns below			E POLICY PERSPECTIVE *(Not Included in the Framework)* ***Key Criteria***		
Yes	Some	No	Item	**CHECKLIST** ***[All Items should be "Yes"]***	**GUIDANCE**
			A. RELEVANCE		
			1	**The problem has been clearly defined.**	See the "Problem Tree Analysis" in the Project Appraisal documentation.
			2	**The problem situation falls within ADB's organization's mandate to address.**	See ADB's Vision & Mission Statement in the Project Appraisal documentation.
			3	**Alternate solutions have been considered and the proposed solution (intervention) is within ADB's technical capability.**	See the "Alternatives Analysis" and "Objective Tree" in the Project Appraisal documentation.
			4	**The target beneficiaries are clearly identified.**	See the Purpose Level Design Summary as well as the Indicators and Target Statements in the Framework; and the more detailed and comprehensive discussion in the RRP.
			B. FEASIBILITY		
			5	**The stakeholders have been involved and, on balance, are supportive.**	See the "Stakeholder Analysis" in the Project Appraisal documentation.
			6	**ADB has the capability to implement the project.**	See the Project Appraisal documentation.
			7	**The necessary resources are available to implement the project.**	See the Department Director's Recommendation.
			C. SUSTAINABILITY		
			8	**The technology proposed for the project intervention is appropriate for the local conditions.**	See the Sector Manager's Recommendation
			9	**The ecological environment will not be unduly adversely affected.**	See the Environmental Impact Statement
			10	**"Ownership" of the project and follow-on program operation by the target beneficiaries appears to be adequate. The relevant authorities / stakeholders have a <u>direct interest</u> — *as well as an assigned role and financial responsibility to provide continuing support for the program operation / situation* — after our project output "deliverables" have been completed.**	Continuing ***"Will, Skill and Wherewithal"*** are indispensable for sustainability. Without these three ingredients in adequate amounts, the best of projects will falter, and eventually fail. While the future can never be foreseen accurately, explicit early commitments are the basis for leading indicators of sustainability. See any Developing Member Country (DMC), Executive Agency (EA), Local Government Unit (LGU), non-government organizations (NGO), Target Beneficiary community organizations, other Donor, ADB Resident Mission (RM) and/or ADB documented assertions.
			Column TOTALS		

E. PROJECT POLICY CHECKLIST SIGNOFF:

Prepared by:_____
Position & Organization:_____
_____
Date:_____

Reviewed & Approved by:_____
Position & Organization:_____
_____
Date:_____