GUIDANCE NOTE: INDEPENDENT REVIEW THROUGH PEER ASSIST

This should be read in conjunction with the Draft Form of Agreement (REF: SC/09/035).

Introduction

1. The industry does not always derive optimum value from project reviews; indeed project reviews are not always carried out. Time pressures, availability of key staff, communication issues and culture contribute to this challenge.

2. The ‘Independent review’ (IR) has been developed with these issues in mind and has been endorsed by the Sponsors of SCOSS. The objective is to promote a more interactive and timely process tuned to the specific needs of the project team. This should lead to reduced risks, greater efficiency and an improved service for clients. It should also stimulate learning, continuous improvement and mentoring.

3. This is achieved by utilising the professional, practical, commercial and legislative (e.g. health and safety) experience of the IR to examine project intents, outputs and decisions so as to allow the IR to suggest where significant risk may be eliminated or mitigated in order to deliver the desired outcomes of the client.

Additional Benefits

4. The concept of IR has been applied by a number of consultants. Experience has demonstrated its effectiveness and has highlighted some extra benefits. These include:
   - Engaging a fully represented project team in this open and interactive process which has stimulated greater awareness and communication within the team.
   - The raising of useful questions and suggestions by members of the project team that may never have been considered without the stimulus of an IR.
   - Responding to questions in the open and interactive forum engendered by IR has enabled initial assumptions to be re-evaluated and misconceptions addressed early and effectively. Examples here might include re-evaluating and clarifying the brief and deliverables, duty to warn, and sustainable development.

5. With regard to mentoring, because IR is so direct and wide ranging, a strong contact with project team members is rapidly established. This stimulates a relationship that is not readily achieved in the traditional process of review. This has been clearly evident in the experience of IR implementation and has encouraged the initiation of follow-up sessions with the reviewer. It has proved particularly helpful to the younger members of the team in creating access to experienced staff in an open and meaningful way.

6. Successful examples of the IR approach will be useful drivers for the required cultural change – hence SCOSS would be pleased to receive examples for the purposes of knowledge sharing.

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1. IR is taken to refer to the process, or individual(s) carrying out the role, as appropriate.
2. Specifically Mott MacDonald, from whose procedures this originates.
Independent Review Process

7 There are a number of elements to the review process:

i) **Key Features**: These might include:
   - Presentations to the IR by the project team focusing on risks through highlighting and sharing concerns.
   - A review report for evaluation and approval by the IR, leading, if necessary, to further discussion and review.

ii) **Reviews**: Reviews are initiated by direct briefing of the IR – principally through a presentation by the (fully represented) project team. The focus should be on the specific issues of concern. The project team should be pro-active in helping the IR to be effective. This would include careful preparation and timing of the review sessions and undertaking the majority of the administration for the IR. This should be cost-effective and will also help the IR focus on the key issues.

iii) **Risk and Innovation**: Involving the IR in brainstorming and risk workshops can be very effective. The development of risk registers is encouraged. Such registers are a useful guide for an IR to consult. Early involvement of the IR should help to identify any issues that need addressing before change becomes impractical – including opportunities for adding value and innovation.

iv) **Timing and Frequency**: It is desirable for the project director/manager to assess needs for IR at all stages of the project. The IR should be involved as soon as practicable – including the bid stage if appropriate. Consideration needs to be given to continuity, how the project will develop, and how the aid of IR can best be utilised. Involvement and input of the IR should extend throughout the project including the construction phase and post project review.

v) **Mentoring**: Because of the interactive nature of IR, it fosters rapport and creates strong opportunities for knowledge sharing and mentoring – particularly for the younger members of the team.

vi) **Reporting**: A draft of each Project Review should be produced promptly by the project team for final review and approval by the IR. This has the following important advantages:
   - Efficiency. It involves and engages the team and provides a vehicle for verification in the project format, and optimises the time input of the IR.
   - Communication. The draft report is a powerful test of communication within the project team and between the project team and the IR, and creates a stronger link overall between the team and the IR.

**Form of agreement**

8 A possible form of agreement is indicated on SC/08/076. Users should review this to ensure it covers the necessary aspects for the particular project e.g. in Clause 15 the ownership of intellectual property rights may occasionally be placed with the IR.

**Schedule 1 of the Form of Agreement**

9 These should be sufficiently specific to identify the key areas to be examined by the IR e.g. cost, occupational safety, buildability, safety margins, and how the client is to facilitate subsequent feedback documentation for the IR.