

# Project Outcomes & The Project Evaluation Process: A Trenchant Tool for Today's Project Management Practitioners <sup>1</sup>

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In its latest **Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)** – i.e. *the 7th* – PMI® ‘deep-sixed’ the *five-step project management process*<sup>2</sup> of the past five decades, highlighted in previous editions. Instead, PMI focused on **the hitherto missing sixth step – Evaluation of the Project Outcome** -- although IMO miscasting responsibility for this process on the project management implementation team, instead of the project sponsor(s).

Nevertheless, as I pointed out the PMWJ last year<sup>3</sup> -- and even earlier<sup>4</sup> several years ago -- it behooves project management teams to be familiar with their project's objectives and the evaluation process, even if not responsible for them, or competent applying the related tools and techniques. To further that end, I have resurrected a relatively easy tool -- **Rapid Review & Quality Appraisal (RRQA)** -- for PMWJ readers, which was originally developed by the Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID) at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for use by international donors assisting national & local government organizations, and NGOs,<sup>5</sup> to assess project status -- *usually about mid-term* -- towards attaining stated objectives.<sup>6</sup>

In 2004 I automated AUSAID's RRQA for the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Independent Evaluation Department – where we dubbed it “**REESI**.”

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<sup>2</sup> **PMI's Five Project Process Groups: Initiation, Planning, Execution, Monitoring & Control, and Closeout**

<sup>3</sup> **On the Subject of the PMBOK Guide, 7th Edition**, Letter to the Editor, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XI, Issue II, February 2022. <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pmwj114-Feb2022-Smith-on-the-pmbok-guide-7th-ed-Letter-to-Editor.pdf>

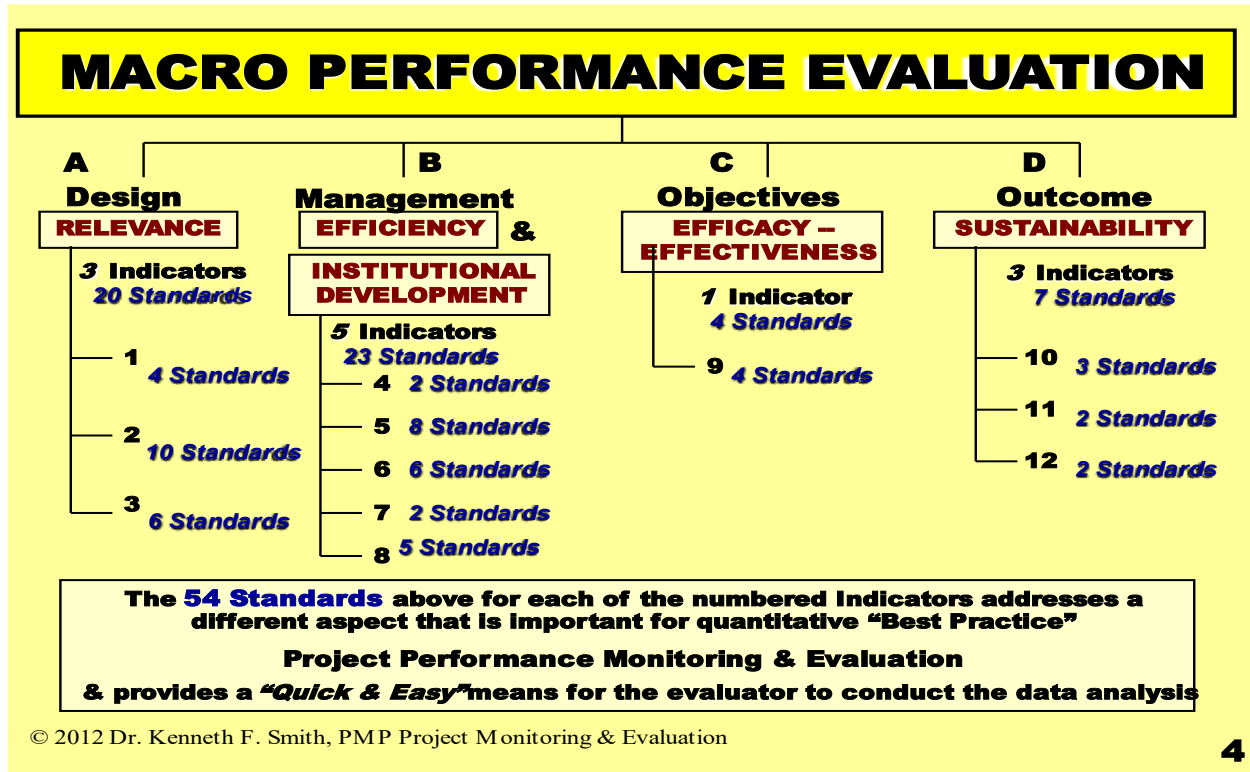
<sup>4</sup> **Evaluation: The Project Management Cycle's Sixth Dimension**; *PM World Journal*, Vol. VII, Issue X – October 2018. <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/pmwj75-Oct2018-Smith-Evaluation-the-project-management-cycle-sixth-dimension-commentary.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> **NGO: Non-Government Organization** – a non-profit socially-active-oriented &/or charitable organization for community social betterment, political interaction in various aspects of economic development.

<sup>6</sup> **NOTE:** As discussed in the ‘Sixth Dimension’ article, it is not a good practice to be *in charge* of the evaluation of a project you are responsible for implementing, as your objectivity with respect to the findings will always be open to question. Better to *assist External evaluators*. Nevertheless, a RRQA is a useful ‘Do It Yourself’ (DIY) checkup.

Rapid Review & Quality Appraisal (RRQA) REESI<sup>7</sup> is a checklist of 54 qualitative ‘standards’ with 12 indicators deemed desirable criteria for a project’s success, in terms of 4 attributes -- its Design, Management, Objectives and Outcome –in 5 dimensions shown in Figure 1, and further elaborated below:

**Figure 1**



1. **RELEVANCE:** Consistency of project **impacts, outcomes** and outputs with development strategy, Donor strategy & strategic objectives [*Assess at approval, midterm and again when the project is completed*]
2. **EFFECTIVENESS [Efficacy]:** Achievement of **Outcome & Impacts**, physical, financial and institutional objectives *as specified in the Policy and adopted at project approval, or as formally modified during implementation.*

<sup>7</sup> REESI: Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Sustainability & Institutional capability. [We also sent back a congratulatory acknowledgement of RRQA to AUSAID, and a courtesy copy of the template for their use.]

3. **EFFICIENCY:** Compares cost-effectiveness (FIRR &/or EIRR) of implementation to attain project **Outcome**.
4. **SUSTAINABILITY:** Likelihood that human institutional & financial resources can support results and benefits over the project’s economic life after implementation.
5. **INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (& other impacts):** Extent to which the project contributes improvements in the “enabling environment” so that its human, financial and natural resources can be more effective.

The Indicators and Standards – *embedded in the template* – are as shown in the following figures:

**Figure 2**  
**RELEVANCE**

<b>A</b>	
<b>1</b>	
<b>Appropriateness of objectives</b>	
A1.1	Objectives are measurable, clear and realistic
A1.2	Beneficiaries and stakeholders needs are reflected in objectives
A1.3	Objectives are consistent with Donor's country strategy
A1.4	Objectives are consistent with the national development priorities of the partner government.
<b>A2</b>	
<b>Adequacy of design process</b>	
A2.1	Appropriate processes were followed for identification, prefeasibility study, feasibility study, appraisal and use of peer reviews
A2.2	Preparation studies were of a high standard -- TOR provided clear and appropriate guidance to the study team & sufficient resources and field time were allowed
A2.3	Development analysis identified factors likely to affect project success, and informs the design team
A2.4	Stakeholders, especially the partner government and beneficiaries, have actively participated and contributed at all stages of design process
A2.5	The logframe approach is clearly and logically applied.
A2.6	Design process takes account of other projects and evidence of how lessons and possible complementarities have been incorporated
A2.7	Alternative approaches and designs were considered.
A2.8	Donor-funded components of co-financed and multilateral activities meet Donor Organization's quality criteria.
A2.9	Appropriate peer review has been undertaken.
A2.10	Adequate appraisal has been undertaken.

**A3 Standard of final design**

- A3.1 The project design document, or latest annual plan, is clear and logical and addresses contracting and implementation needs.
- A3.2 Logframe matrix present realistic and measurable objectives, outputs, and clear indicators.
- A3.3 Donor's appropriate cross-cutting issues have been incorporated.
- A3.4 Clear and workable institutional and organizational arrangements are in place.
- A3.5 Cost schedules provide adequate detail of estimated partner government and Donor inputs.
- A3.6 Clear and achievable implementation strategy and schedules are part of the design.

**Figure 3**

**EFFICIENCY & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

<b>B4 Timeliness of implementation</b>	
B4.1	Project starts up efficiently, and the first year's annual plan has been prepared and agreed without delay.
B4.2	Response and action times in undertaking project implementation are acceptable to the Donor's stakeholders.
<b>B5 Standard of contract and contractor performance</b>	
B5.1	Contracting strategy is appropriate.
B5.2	Design is sufficiently flexible to allow for adjustments during implementation.
B5.3	Contract scope of services and basis of payment are clear, concise and consistent with project design document or latest annual plan.
B5.4	Contract scope of services and basis of payment have facilitated successful implement -- Risk has been sensibly allocated between parties, and Milestones have been identified.
B5.5	Contractor's performance is on track and efficient.
B5.6	Contractor's project team is optimistic, confident and motivated.
B5.7	Contractor develops professional partnerships with stakeholders.
B5.8	Partner government project staff are trained on the job and work in a professional capacity.
<b>B6 Strength of partner government support and value of dialogue</b>	
B6.1	Partner government policy environment remains favorable for project implementation.
B6.2	Project has strong support from key senior officials of the partner government in implementation.
B6.3	Working relationship between the post and partner government allows for problems and sensitive issues to be discussed openly and resolved quickly.
B6.4	The Donor team leader and the team leader of the partner government have a productive working partnership.
B6.5	Institutional and organizational arrangements are working well.
B6.6	Partner government responsibilities and inputs are maintained at levels agreed to in memorandum of understanding and/or memorandum of agreements.
<b>B7 Donor management and use of resources</b>	
B7.1	HQ and field mission staff have had sufficient opportunity to become familiar with the project and to monitor it first hand.
B7.2	Strategic use of Donor teams and/or technical advisory groups has added value to project implementation.
<b>B8 Effectiveness of project monitoring and communications</b>	
B8.1	Risk management strategies are monitored and adjusted as required during implementation.
B8.2	Reporting requirements are appropriate.
B8.3	Communications between the Mission and the Donor team leader are regular and frequent.
B8.4	Field team is responsive to beneficiaries and stakeholders views.
B8.5	Monitoring framework describes monitoring activities in terms of logframe outcomes and outputs and details the data, analysis, and reporting requirements.

**Figure 4**  
**EFFICACY -- EFFECTIVENESS**

<b>C9 Progress in achieving objectives</b>	
C9.1	Realistic overall assessment indicates that the project is likely to achieve its objectives.
C9.2	Activities and outputs are likely to be completed on schedule.
C9.3	Activities and outputs are likely to be completed within budget.
C9.4	Improvements are likely to occur in Donor's cross-cutting issues.

**Figure 5**  
**SUSTAINABILITY**

<b>D10 Sustainability of benefits</b>	
D10.1	Sustainability strategies are monitored and adjusted as required during implementation.
D10.2	Counterparts and beneficiaries are likely to have sufficient knowledge, skills and resources to maintain benefits post-project.
D10.3	A system of benefits, or a facility providing benefits, is likely to be financially supported by the partner government, the community or the beneficiaries, after the project is completed.
<b>D11 Sustainability of improved institutional capacity</b>	
D11.1	Implementing institution has high-level officials personally committed to maintain benefits after the project is completed.
D11.2	Project is likely to give implementing institution sufficient capacity to maintain assets and systems after the project is completed.
<b>D12 Maintenance of future recurrent budget</b>	
D12.1	Partner government's commitment favors the continuation of benefits after the project has been completed.
D12.2	Increases in the recurrent budget after the project is completed are likely to be manageable.

These Qualitative standards within each indicator, and each attribute are then weighted by the evaluation team, then rated and scored – with either a “Judge” or “Jury” approach – to provide a summary of Attribute Scores, and an Overall Rating.<sup>8</sup>

AUSAID scoring was on a ‘1 Low to 5 High’ scale.

<sup>8</sup> A separate template is provided to record, consolidate and summarize ‘Jury’ team ratings of each standard, before final rating and scoring on the REESI template.

However, as other entities utilize different rating systems (*i.e. the ADB uses ‘1 Low to 4 High,’ whereas the World Bank Group uses a ‘4 Low to 1 High’ range*), I prepared additional templates to accommodate them.<sup>9</sup>

This Rapid Review Quality Appraisal approach was originally designed and developed for use by international donor agencies, and sponsors assisting government entities, to assess project implementation performance for targeted beneficiaries. Nevertheless – *with the templates to facilitate computation weighting, rating and scoring*<sup>10</sup> -- it is readily adaptable for use by non-government entities to assess the status of their programs and projects towards achieving their various outcomes.

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## About the Author



### **Dr. Kenneth Smith**

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Initially a US Civil Service Management Intern, then a management analyst & systems specialist with the US Defense Department, Ken subsequently had a career as a senior foreign service officer -- management & evaluation specialist, project manager, and in-house facilitator/trainer -- with the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Ken assisted host country governments in many countries to plan, monitor and evaluate projects in various technical sectors; working ‘hands-on’ with their officers as well as other USAID personnel, contractors and NGOs. Intermittently, he was also a team leader &/or team member to conduct project, program & and country-level portfolio analyses and evaluations.

Concurrently, Ken had an active dual career as Air Force ready-reservist in Asia (Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines) as well as the Washington D.C. area; was Chairman of a Congressional Services Academy Advisory Board (SAAB); and had additional duties as an Air Force Academy Liaison Officer. He retired as a ‘bird’ colonel.

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<sup>9</sup> As usual, these templates are available from me for free, on proof of purchase of my **Project Management PRAXIS** book (available from Amazon).

<sup>10</sup> ‘Not Applicable’ items can be weighted & scored “0”.

After retirement from USAID, Ken was a project management consultant for ADB, the World Bank, UNDP and USAID.

He earned his DPA (Doctor of Public Administration) from the George Mason University (GMU) in Virginia, his MS from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT Systems Analysis Fellow, Center for Advanced Engineering Study), and BA & MA degrees in Government & International Relations from the University of Connecticut (UCONN). A long-time member of the Project Management Institute (PMI) and IPMA-USA, Ken is a Certified Project Management Professional (PMP®) and a member of the PMI®-Honolulu and Philippines Chapters.

Ken's book -- **Project Management PRAXIS** (available from Amazon) -- includes many innovative project management tools & techniques; and describes a "**Toolkit**" of related templates available directly from him at [kensmith@aol.com](mailto:kensmith@aol.com) on proof of purchase of PRAXIS.