



# Technical Review Guide Executive summary

Download the guide at  
[www.climateactiontransparency.org/icat-toolbox/technical-review](http://www.climateactiontransparency.org/icat-toolbox/technical-review)

*Governments around the world are implementing increasingly ambitious policies and actions in pursuit of sustainable development and climate change objectives. Robust monitoring and reporting frameworks are essential in ensuring that policies and actions are effective in delivering their intended outcomes. Technical review is part of a state-of-the-art framework and can bring a number of benefits.*

*Reviews can enhance transparency, trust and confidence in the implementation of policies and actions, and the reporting of their impacts. This can be particularly important to donor agencies and financial institutions, which in turn can help policymakers secure funding or financing for their policies and actions. Reviews can play an important role in supporting learning and improvement of assessments over time. They can also help prepare countries for participating in technical expert review in line with the modalities of the Paris Agreement.*

*The unprecedented challenge of climate change requires that society undergoes a fundamental shift away from carbon-intensive and unsustainable models of development. The urgency of policy action for a transition towards net zero global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions was underlined in the 2018 Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. As ever deeper emissions reductions are required, the effective assessment of policy impacts becomes increasingly important, and technical review in supporting and strengthening assessment processes becomes critical. The Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT) Technical Review Guide helps policymakers and technical reviewers engage in productive reviews that can achieve these aims.*

## Reviewing policy impact assessments

ICAT provides methodologies for assessing the GHG, sustainable development and transformational impacts of policies and actions (hereafter referred to as “policies”, for brevity) in an integrated and comprehensive manner across all levels of governance. The ICAT *Technical Review Guide* provides guidance for conducting technical reviews of impact assessment reports produced by these assessments.

Technical review is a process that evaluates an assessment report in accordance with agreed criteria and scope. The focus can be on learning and improvement, increasing transparency of reported impact assessments, or both. Specific objectives of technical review can include the following:

- **Planning and evaluation of policies.** Use technical review as a tool to foster learning and continual improvement. Support improved selection, design and implementation of policies through a more rigorous understanding of their impacts.
- **Reporting the impacts of policies.** Pursue technical review with an external audience in mind. Increase transparency and confidence in reported impacts of policies, including under the Paris Agreement’s enhanced transparency framework. Demonstrate results to donor agencies or financial institutions that provide funding or financing for policies.
- **Supporting consistency and comparability.** Facilitate the consistent assessment of a single policy over time and the comparability of reported impacts of different policies, thereby fostering greater trust and ambition in climate policies worldwide.

## Series of ICAT assessment guides

ICAT aims to help countries assess the impacts of their climate actions, and to support greater transparency, effectiveness, ambition and trust in climate policies worldwide. The *Technical Review Guide* is part of the ICAT series of guides for assessing the GHG, sustainable development and transformational impacts of policies and actions in an integrated way. The guides are a result of collaboration with technical experts from around the world.

### SERIES OF ICAT ASSESSMENT GUIDES

Introduction to the ICAT Assessment Guides

#### Impact assessment guides

##### Greenhouse gas impacts:



Renewable Energy



Transport Pricing



Forestry



Agriculture



Buildings Efficiency



Sustainable Development



Transformational Change



Non-State and Subnational Action

#### Process guides



Stakeholder Participation



Technical Review

The assessment guides have been used to support capacity-building for transparency in more than 20 countries. Case studies are available on the ICAT website. To learn more about how ICAT supports countries, visit [www.climateactiontransparency.org](http://www.climateactiontransparency.org).

## Intended audience

The guide is intended for two different audiences. The first is developing country governments and their partners (domestic and international) who are assessing and reporting on the GHG, sustainable development and/or transformational impacts of policies, particularly in the context of development and implementation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national low-emission development strategies, nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) and other mechanisms. The guide can be used for policies at the national, subnational or municipal level.

The second audience is those who conduct technical review of these impact assessments.

## Types of technical review

The guide considers three options for conducting a technical review. The most appropriate will depend on the objective of the review:

- **First party.** The review is carried out by a government agency – either the agency that implemented the policy and/or conducted the impact assessment, or a different government agency. (If the reviewing agency is an independent inspector or auditor, the review would be considered a second-party review; see below.) This type of review is similar to internal auditing, quality control procedures or other systems used for learning and improvement.
- **Second party.** The review is performed by a person or organization that has an interest in, or affiliation with, the government agency. The most common examples are review by an internal auditor general or independent regulatory body of the government, or by a consultant who has an interest in, or affiliation with, the design or implementation of the policy.

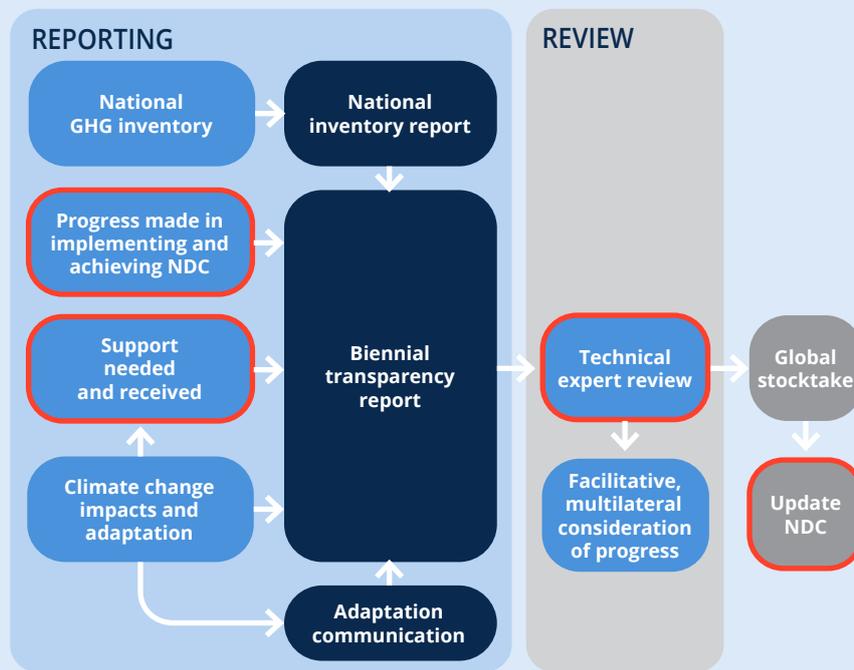
- Third party.** The review is carried out by a person or organization that is independent of the government agency in terms of commercial, financial and legal interests. This is probably the best known of the three types of review. The guide describes two kinds of third-party review: independent verification, and technical expert review or analysis. Independent verification is modelled on the process for carbon project validation/verification, whereas technical expert review or analysis stems from the process for expert review within the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change, notably the international assessment and review (IAR) process, and the international consultation and analysis (ICA) process.

First-party review can be the most appropriate type of review where the emphasis is on learning and continual improvement. Third-party review provides the most independence and credibility, and therefore may be the most appropriate if the review is being conducted with an external audience in mind. Second-party review provides a middle ground between these two.

Considerations to help choose the appropriate type of technical review	High Very Yes	Medium Somewhat	Low Slightly No
<b>Is the technical review of an ex-ante impact assessment?</b>	First, second	-	Third
<b>How difficult is it for entities other than the government agency to gain access to information, assumptions and data regarding the impact assessment?</b>	First	Second	Third
<b>How important is it for the technical reviewer to be, or to be perceived as, minimally vulnerable to conflicts of interest?</b>	Third	Second	First
<b>How experienced with undergoing technical review is the government agency?</b>	First	Second	Third
<b>How much funding is available for the technical review process?</b>	Third	Second	First
<b>What level of independence is necessary for the intended audience of the technical review?</b>	Third	Second	First
<b>What level of transparency and stakeholder confidence in the technical review results is necessary?</b>	Third	-	First, second
<b>Does the donor and/or private financier of the policy require technical review?</b>	Second, third	-	First
<b>Is it necessary for the reviewer to have relevant accreditation?</b>	Third	-	First, second

## Advancing climate action through the enhanced transparency framework



By helping policymakers assess the impacts of policies and actions, the ICAT assessment guides can help countries track progress in implementation and further develop their NDCs towards enhanced ambition. The ICAT assessment guides can also help provide the necessary information for countries to report under the Paris Agreement’s enhanced transparency framework.

The transparency framework requires that countries provide information on tracking progress made in implementing and achieving NDCs. This information must undergo technical expert review; the process is elaborated on in the modalities, procedures and guidelines for the transparency framework. The ICAT *Technical Review Guide* supports this process by providing countries with information to help them prepare for, plan and participate in reviews.

- Reporting inputs and aspects of the transparency framework
- Reports under the transparency framework
- ICAT assessment guides can help with reporting inputs and aspects of the transparency framework



## Main steps for conducting technical review

A technical review involves five steps. A prerequisite is to conduct an impact assessment and produce an assessment report. The whole process of review can be considered iterative, with learning and improvement feeding into subsequent impact assessments and technical reviews.

1. **Determine the objectives, criteria, scope and type of technical review.** The government agency determines the objectives of the review, from which the appropriate criteria, scope and type of review logically flow.
2. **Prepare for the technical review.** The government agency prepares all the necessary information and evidence, and makes these available to a prospective technical reviewer. This allows the reviewer to prepare a proposal and submit it to the agency.
3. **Plan the technical review.** This is a joint effort between the government agency and the technical reviewer. They establish a review plan, with timelines for key activities and milestones.
4. **Conduct the technical review.** The reviewer conducts the review according to the agreed plan and produces a technical review statement. The desk review may be supplemented by field visits, interviews and surveys.
5. **Report the results.** The reviewer produces a report, documenting areas of the assessment report that could be strengthened. The government agency responds to these findings, and the reviewer finalizes the report.

