# 6 Preparing for technical review

*Technical reviews are based on information and evidence prepared by the user. Before engaging in review activities, all necessary information and evidence is prepared and made available to a prospective technical reviewer. This will enable the prospective technical reviewer to prepare a proposal for the review and for the user to select a technical reviewer.*

**Checklist of key recommendations**

- Request sufficient information from the user to make an informed determination as to the knowledge, skills and experience needed by the review team to conduct the technical review

## 6.1 Identify necessary technical reviewer qualifications and select technical reviewer

Chapter 4 provides information about qualifications of technical reviewers. Users should identify the needed qualifications given the objectives, scope and type of the technical review. For example, a technical review of GHG impacts with the objective of demonstrating results to a donor is likely to require different qualifications from a review of sustainable

development impacts for a domestic audience. Box 6.1 provides an example of how the technical reviewer was selected to conduct the technical review of an impact assessment of a nationally appropriate mitigation action (NAMA).
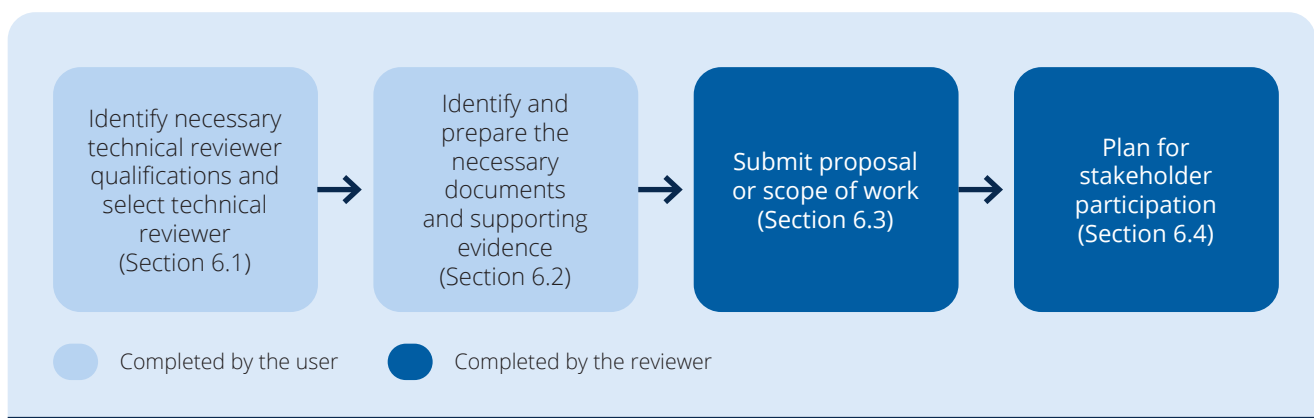
## 6.2 Identify and prepare the necessary documents and supporting evidence

To prepare for a technical review, a complete assessment report is needed. Each ICAT assessment guide has a chapter on reporting that specifies the information that should be included in an assessment report. The assessment report and supporting evidence should be prepared and provided to potential technical reviewers as part of the selection and planning process. The quality of the assessment report and supporting evidence provided to the technical reviewer can either facilitate (if the quality is high) or hinder (if the quality is low) their understanding of the policy to be evaluated.

It is helpful for the user to prepare a "terms of reference" document for the potential technical reviewer so that they have these in writing. The terms of reference set out a plan or a proposal

FIGURE **6.1**

**Overview of steps in the chapter**



| Identify necessary technical reviewer qualifications and select technical reviewer (Section 6.1) | → | Identify and prepare the necessary documents and supporting evidence (Section 6.2) | → | Submit proposal or scope of work (Section 6.3) | → | Plan for stakeholder participation (Section 6.4) |

● Completed by the user     ● Completed by the reviewer

BOX **6.1**

**Example of selecting a technical reviewer**

The Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda, a national NGO in Mexico, is coordinating the implementation of the NAMA "Subnational mitigation actions for the regeneration of landscapes". The NAMA includes state-led policies and actions for the regeneration of forests, and the implementation of planned grazing in 12 states. An ex-post assessment of impacts was conducted for the mitigation actions already implemented, and an ex-ante impact assessment was conducted for the scale-up and replication of the mitigation actions. Impact assessment reports were prepared following the key recommendations of the ICAT *Forest Methodology, Agriculture Methodology, Non-State and Subnational Action Assessment Guide and Transformational Change Methodology.*

Some of the mitigation actions included in the NAMA were implemented as part of a Grupo Ecológico project with financing from the Multilateral Investment Fund of the InterAmerican Development Bank. Therefore, Grupo Ecológico decided to pursue technical review of the impact assessment reports in conjunction with the final evaluation of the project. It was necessary to select a technical reviewer with the combined experience and qualifications necessary to evaluate the results of the completed project, as well as the assessments of GHG impacts and transformational change potential.

The request for proposals for a technical reviewer was sent to Mexican members of the UNFCCC Roster of Experts, GHG validation and verification bodies accredited by the Entidad Mexicana de Acreditación, verification bodies accredited under the forest offsets program that is most frequently used in Mexico, and other organizations with GHG quantification and sector expertise.

Proposals for the combined third-party project final evaluation and technical review of ICAT impact assessment reports were received from three accredited verification bodies, a team from the UNFCCC Roster of Experts, and an organization with a combination of GHG quantification and sector expertise. All proposals received involved highly qualified evaluation teams. The technical reviewer was selected based on their combination of GHG quantification experience, broad sector transformation expertise and experience with the pilot project donor.

for how the review will take place. The terms of reference should cover topics such as:

- qualifications or competencies required of the reviewer(s) or their organization(s)

- requests for curriculum vitae or resumes

- desired composition of the review team and scope of work of the team leader

- definition of deliverables to be produced (reports) and timing of their submission, as well as phases of revision and comments

- time frame for delivery of final reports

- requirements for in-person or remote meetings, such as opening and closing meetings

- expectations for stakeholder consultation, if relevant

- specific scope requirements

- costs, professional fees or budget terms

- travel and expenses allowed

- determination of confidential material and how it will be handled

- any public claims that are to be made based on the review report.

The information the technical reviewer needs to review will be more extensive than the information in the assessment report. Users should present all the underlying data and calculations to enable the reviewer to evaluate the accuracy of the results. These can include:

- underlying data

- calculations, such as spreadsheets

- assumptions for calculations

- sources and references used

- a list of identified stakeholder groups

- other supporting documents and evidence that were used to arrive at the assessment results.

## 6.3 Submit proposal or scope of work

It is a *key recommendation* for the reviewer to request sufficient information from the user to make an informed determination as to the knowledge, skills and experience needed by the review team to conduct the technical review. When the technical reviewer has received all the documents and supporting evidence, they submit a proposal (in the case where the user will sign a formal contract with the reviewer, such as for second- or third-party review) or a scope of work (in the case of the user appointing a team from within a government agency, such as for first-party review). The proposal or scope of work should address each topic in the terms of reference, and provide an evaluation of any potential conflicts of interest.

### 6.3.1 Conflict of interest

Users and reviewers should be aware that, with any technical review, there is the potential for bias and subjectivity if the technical reviewer has a vested interest in the outcome. Simply put, a technical reviewer's interests in returning either a positive or negative outcome in the technical review statement can come into conflict with the greater goal of an impartial and objective evaluation. This is referred to as conflict of interest.[26]

Potential circumstances that may cause a real or perceived conflict of interest are:

- direct employment with the organization, company or government agency in the recent past (e.g. within two years)

- close relatives working with the organization, company or government agency (e.g. spouse, in-laws, parents, grandparents, children, siblings)

- economic relationship with the organization, company or government agency (e.g. as shareholder)

- personal motivation for gain from the outcome of the review.

Reviewers are expected to disclose and mitigate any real or potential conflicts of interest at the stage of technical reviewer selection or technical review planning. Review team members should disclose any present or prior relationship with the user, relevant stakeholders or other entities involved in the policy being assessed that presents, or could appear to present, a conflict of interest with the review.

The reduced independence between the user and technical reviewer in first- or second-party review increases the likelihood of conflicts of interest. For all types of review, users should report how potential and actual conflicts of interest were avoided or minimized during the review process.

## 6.4 Plan for stakeholder participation (if relevant)

Users and reviewers can involve stakeholders in technical review of an assessment report (see the ICAT *Stakeholder Participation Guide*), including a review of the effectiveness of the stakeholder participation process, by:

- seeking stakeholder input and participation in the review process to supplement the evidence available to the reviewer

- engaging stakeholders to lead the review process, particularly when reviewing the effectiveness of the stakeholder participation process in the impact assessment.

### 6.4.1 Stakeholder participation in technical review

Before beginning the technical review process, technical reviewers should consider how stakeholder participation could support their evaluation of the assessment report, and include relevant activities and associated resources in their technical review plan. Stakeholder participation can strengthen the technical review of an assessment report by providing additional input and confirmation of the evidence provided by the user. It can also help to demonstrate transparency and build confidence among stakeholder groups in the assessment and the review process. Stakeholder participation can also help achieve the objectives of the review

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[26]  See ANSI (2016) for more information.

by building support for policies among diverse stakeholders.

As part of the impact assessment, users may have established a multi-stakeholder body consisting of stakeholders with relevant skills and experience. To facilitate effective stakeholder participation in the technical review process, technical reviewers should ask for the contact information for these stakeholder groups (if it is not provided initially). Stakeholder groups can provide additional information or evidence to the technical reviewer during the desk review or field visit process.

When designing and preparing for an effective multi-stakeholder technical review process, consider the following points:

- The effectiveness of the technical review will be enhanced by consulting a broad range of stakeholders and providing effective opportunities for them to give feedback on the assessment report. The more feedback is received and the more this feedback is addressed in the report, the more the technical review will enhance the credibility of the report. The technical review process should be designed to be as inclusive as possible.

- The assessment report being reviewed should be provided to stakeholders well in advance of opportunities to provide feedback, to enable them to discuss and prepare their feedback, especially where consultations will be conducted through representatives of stakeholder groups. Reports should be provided in a language and format that are understood by stakeholders. Refer to the ICAT *Stakeholder Participation Guide*, Chapter 8, for guidance on designing and conducting consultations, and sharing reports with stakeholders.

- Stakeholders are likely to be more open in providing honest, and potentially negative, feedback if the consultations are facilitated by people independent of the organizers of the stakeholder participation process. Consider the relative advantages of an evaluation process led by the reviewer and a multi-stakeholder assessment that may include the organizers of the participation processes (such as government). These approaches could also be combined, taking into account the country context and the level of trust between stakeholders.

The ICAT *Stakeholder Participation Guide* provides further information, such as how to identify different stakeholder groups, how to provide them with information, how to engage them in multi-stakeholder bodies through consultations and through feedback and grievance redress mechanisms, and when to engage them in the technical review process.

# 7 Planning the technical review

*Technical review planning is a joint effort between the user and the technical reviewer. The user's objectives, as well as the established criteria and scope of the review, inform the reviewer's activities and schedule.*

**Checklist of key recommendations**

• Coordinate with the user to establish a technical review plan

## 7.1 Submit documentation and supporting evidence to the reviewer

Users should provide the reviewer with all necessary documentation and supporting evidence for the review (as described in Section 6.2). If the assessment report and supporting evidence have not changed since the user submitted them to the reviewer during the proposal and contract process (see Chapter 6), the technical reviewer will have the necessary documentation. If the documentation has been updated – for example, if substantial time (several months to a year or more) has elapsed since planning of the review – current and complete documentation should be sent to the technical reviewer. The technical reviewer may request additional documents or supporting evidence. This is not unusual and can facilitate review of the assessment report.

## 7.2 Establish a technical review plan

It is a *key recommendation* for the reviewer to coordinate with the user to establish a technical review plan. Technical review plans typically include timelines for key activities and milestones, including start and completion of the technical review. The key activities and milestones should be based on the scope of the technical review. The user and technical reviewer should make sure they agree on the scope of the review and include a description of the scope in the plan. The technical reviewer should consider the risks and magnitude of potential errors, omissions and misrepresentations in the assessment report in preparing the plan.

Technical review plans should include the type of information that will be reviewed. Example information to include in the technical review plan is given in Table 7.1. Accredited verification firms may also have specific guidelines for additional information to present in a plan.

Users should inform relevant stakeholders of when the technical review will be conducted. This enables interested parties to prepare and plan for participation in the review if they would like to do so. Refer to the ICAT *Stakeholder Participation Guide*, Chapter 7, for guidance on providing information to stakeholders.
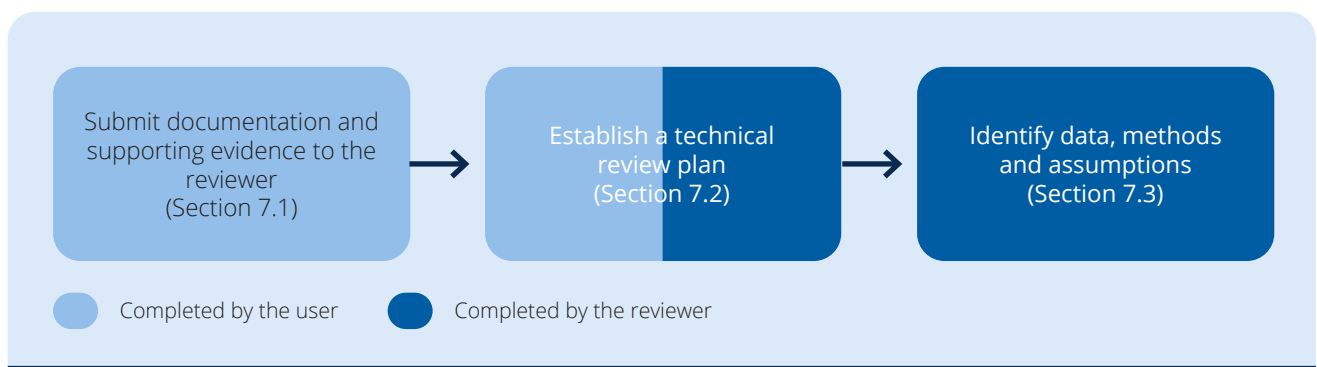
FIGURE **7.1**

**Overview of steps in the chapter**



| Submit documentation and supporting evidence to the reviewer (Section 7.1) | → | Establish a technical review plan (Section 7.2) | → | Identify data, methods and assumptions (Section 7.3) |

Completed by the user      Completed by the reviewer

TABLE **7.1**

**Example information to include in technical review plans**

| Information | Description |
|---|---|
| Responsible entities | The name of the entity that implemented the policy, plus the name of the entity that contracts with the technical reviewer (if this is a different entity). |
| Criteria and scope of technical review | Technical review criteria and scope, including the name of the policy and assessment report to be reviewed (see Chapter 5 for information about criteria and scope). Where the user is targeting a certain level of assurance, include the selected level of the assurance and the materiality threshold. |
| Qualifications of technical review team | Summary of review team's qualifications for the assignment (see Chapter 4). |
| Schedule for field visit (if relevant) | For reviews that involve a field visit to facilities, offices, communities or other sites (e.g. to gain first-hand understanding of policy impacts, or meet with individuals or community groups), a schedule that describes the locations to be visited and itinerary. |
| Schedule for technical review report | Schedule with expected timelines for the completion of draft and final reports, including the number of iterations of the report (whereby the user and reviewer exchange comments and responses). Specifications for a report template can also be included. |
| Supporting evidence | A list of additional documentation or evidence provided by the user (see Section 6.2). |
| Stakeholder contact information | Contact information for any stakeholders (other than the responsible entity listed above) that the reviewer would like to interview. These could include other government agencies, partnering institutions, universities, civil society organizations or local community groups. |

## 7.3 Identify data, methods and assumptions

The ICAT assessment guides provide approaches and key recommendations that help users to define the methods, models, tools and assumptions that guide transparent and effective assessment and reporting of GHG, sustainable development and transformational impacts of policies. Such documents are relevant to the technical reviewer when planning a technical review. Before conducting a review, the reviewer will obtain information on methods, models, tools and assumptions associated with each impact type included in the assessment.