TEKNOLOGI-RÅDET

Ocean Rise
How to design a scenario workshop on local management of ocean rises and flooding for local actors?

Section B: Framing
No. 6: General Guidelines for Project Descriptions for the Danish Board of Technology

Project descriptions must meet certain quality criteria – so as to supply the board of governors with a proper basis for decisions, and so as to provide the project manager with an instrument of control once the project has been approved. This paper presents a number of guidelines for the composition of project descriptions. These guidelines are meant to establish a common structure for all project descriptions, to ensure that the content is adequate, and to provide the project manager with a number of pointers when contemplating the planning of the project in question.

Only in rare instances should the project description exceed 5 pages. It consists of various considerations in relation to subject-matter, target group and presentation of the method employed, an outline of a time schedule and a budget featuring principal items. More elaborate supplements may be enclosed. As a tool in day to day operations the secretariat may prepare a more detailed version to be employed in the internal management of the project.

The project description

The description contains the following elements:

- The background of the project
- The idea of the project
- Purpose
- Target groups and presentation
- Approach/method
- Project organization
- Time schedule
- Budget

A brief description of the individual elements (except budget) follows below.

When composing the project description, the following questions must be addressed, although only significant/relevant considerations are to be included in the actual description:

1. What is needed? Which focus and why? What angle? For example: Is there a need for knowledge-creation – and if so, knowledge of what? Bringing actors together – why? Elucidating possible lines of action or solutions – for whom?
2. Is the project sufficiently delimited and specified? Will it produce the relevant degree of detail?
3. Is the timing correct? Is there a need for the chosen focus just now? What is needed the most right now?
4. How does the project relate to previous work within the field?
5. Will the results of the project have the proper quality? Is the project "good enough" without being exaggerated and pretentious, but also of unquestionable quality? Does the project make use of the right knowledge resources?
6. Is it guaranteed that the project is not one-sided? That it does not promote special avowed or un-avowed agendas? Will its results have the legitimacy that is required if they are to serve as the basis of decisions?
7. Does the project seek to establish a general and coherent view? Which perspectives are included: social, democratic, economy (private or national), technical, ethical, environmental, health and safety issues in the workplace, international relations, risk, health …?
8. How does the project enter into the processes of public decision-making and into public debate? How are the requirements of the Parliament taken into consideration, and what weight are they given in the project? Are other "customers" of crucial significance?

The method and target groups of the project are presented in a brief outline.

The background of the project

Here, the current situation within the subject-matter area is described. This description may cover e.g. historical, technical, social and political elements. It must present readers without prior knowledge of the matter at hand with enough knowledge to be able to understand the remaining part of the project description.

Former studies within the field in question – carried out by the Board of Technology or other parties - are briefly summarised.

The idea of the project

This section is a summary of the project description with an in-depth presentation of the focus of the project and the relevance thereof. If pressed for time, one must be able to read this section alone and still be able to assess whether the project can be approved. Why is this project needed? The focus/angle of the project is substantiated. Thus, it is substantiated that the project deals with the most relevant subset of issues within the topic, and that it does so in the most relevant way. This part should not take up more than ½ a page.

Purpose

Of the following purposes the project description must make mention of the ones that the project is meant to serve:

- Giving a survey of the area for the use of … which parties?
- Pointing out problems/barriers within the area.
- Bridging the gap/mediating a dialogue between …?
- Presenting possible solutions.
- Assessing the consequences of these.
- Offering recommendations.
- Stimulating debate among ....?
- Creating network among ....?

Target groups and communication

When completing this section, the project manager must be aware of the difference between market (potentially interested parties) and target group (the group that you communicate to directly or involve). A target group can be a stepping stone to reach a market or another target group.

- How is project publicized as it unfolds?
- Which groups are targeted, and which steps are taken to reach them? Which parts of the market are not targeted directly and why?
- How is the Parliament or other decision makers informed of the results? Are they of relevance to the Parliament?
- Which special presentation materials must be made (film/video presentation, leaflets …) and why?
- Which ordinary products (such as reports, RTT, press releases …) must be made? In how many copies?

It must be clear, how the project intends to follow up on its individual purposes by way of communication. For example:

- How will the knowledge retrieved or created be imparted to outside parties?
- How will potential problems, solutions, consequences thereof and recommendations be imparted to outside parties?
- What sort of support should be made available to the people that may help us impart the results to a wider group of people (informational start kits, collection of overheads etc.)?

Approach/method

Approval of the project requires that a specific method has been chosen and that it is clear how the project is meant to be carried out in general. This section, then, describes what kind of project we are dealing with, and how the secretariat plans to get the work done.

What main type of method has been chosen (expert opinion, workgroup, workshop, consensus conference, public information and general education …)? What necessary adaptations of this method can be foreseen?

A brief description of the method can be included – for readers without prior knowledge.

A position must be taken on the following points and, possibly, something must be put down in writing about them as well:

- How is the right knowledge input ensured?
- How is it ensured that controversial issues are brought up?
- Who retrieves knowledge and opinions? Are they qualified to do so?
- Who assesses? Do they have the necessary legitimacy to do so?
- Who controls these processes? Are they sufficiently neutral to be able to do so in a democratic way?
- If the project can be divided in several phases, it should be done in this section.

Outcome and outcome measures must be considered, and if such considerations are relevant, they must be included in the description of approach/method:

Which specific results, and for whom, can the project be expected to produce? How is the project meant to make an impression?
Who will possibly act differently due to the project? Who will come to know more? What new possibilities have been opened for whom?
Can it be measured, and if so how, whether such outcomes have been achieved – whether the project has made an impression? Such measures could be the columnage achieved in the daily papers, the bills introduced in Parliament, the number of publications sold etc.

Such considerations constitute a healthy training for project manager as well as board of governors, because they involve the explicit attempt to phrase certain requirements to the outcome of the projects. It is to be expected that the likelihood of achieving the desired outcome is greatly enhanced, if all possibilities have been considered.

Project organization

Hiring of consultants and assistants. Co-operation with other organisations. Responsible manager in the secretariat.

Putting together a work group, and possibly a supervising group or planning group, is a highly important point. When submitting the project to the board of governors, the composition of this group must be so concrete and genuine that the board of governors is actually in a position to form an opinion on the personal legitimacy of the group. A few positions may remain unspecified – but

generally the description must suggest specific persons for all positions and offer an ultra-short indication of their qualifications.

Time Schedule

The course of the project is described in a time plan, stating crucial landmarks such as:

- Commencement of work
- Public meetings
- Important deadlines
- Release of publications
- Finalisation date

If the project is divided into phases, these phases must appear from the time schedule.