
Guidelines for management consultancy services

Lignes directrices relatives aux services de conseil en management

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Contents

Page

Foreword	v
Introduction	vi
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Principles	4
4.1 General	4
4.1.1 Scope	4
4.1.2 Typical consulting process	4
4.1.3 Responsibilities	5
4.2 Other standards	5
4.3 Ongoing evaluation and improvement	5
4.4 Policies	6
4.4.1 Regulatory framework	6
4.4.2 Stakeholder engagement and commitment	6
4.4.3 Code of ethical and professional conduct	6
4.4.4 Project governance	7
4.4.5 Capability	7
4.4.6 Communication	8
4.4.7 Data protection and confidentiality	8
4.4.8 Protection of intellectual property	8
4.4.9 Social responsibility	8
4.4.10 Health and safety	8
4.4.11 Risk and quality management	9
4.4.12 Guarantees	9
5 Contracting	9
5.1 General	9
5.2 Purpose	9
5.3 Input	9
5.4 Outcome	10
5.5 Contents	10
5.5.1 General	10
5.5.2 Context	10
5.5.3 Services and deliverables	10
5.5.4 Approach and work plan	11
5.5.5 Roles and responsibilities	11
5.5.6 Acceptance criteria	11
5.5.7 Terms and conditions	12
6 Execution	12
6.1 General	12
6.2 Purpose	12
6.3 Input	12
6.4 Outcome	12
6.5 Contents	13
6.5.1 General	13
6.5.2 Refining the agreed work plan	13
6.5.3 Implementing the work plan	13
6.5.4 Assignment management and monitoring	13
6.5.5 Approvals and acceptance	15
7 Closure	15
7.1 General	15
7.2 Purpose	15

7.3	Input.....	15
7.4	Outcome.....	16
7.5	Contents.....	16
7.5.1	Legal and contractual matters.....	16
7.5.2	Final evaluation and improvement.....	16
7.5.3	Administrative matters.....	17
7.5.4	Communication.....	17
7.5.5	Outstanding minor issues.....	17
Annex A (informative) Supplementary information on ISO standards		18
Annex B (informative) Examples of typical stakeholders.....		19
Annex C (informative) Basic structure of consulting activities.....		20
Annex D (informative) Examples of guidelines for MCSPs for a code of conduct.....		22
Annex E (informative) Examples of guidelines to manage conflicts of interest.....		23
Annex F (informative) Examples of criteria to evaluate capability		25
Annex G (informative) Examples of guidelines for MCSPs for typical risk management.....		27
Annex H (informative) Examples of typical understanding activities “pre-assignment”		28
Bibliography		29

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Project Committee ISO/PC 280, *Management consultancy*.

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Introduction

Management consultants use their know-how to support clients in any sector locally, regionally and globally to deal with important issues such as handling complexity, achieving sustainable organizational growth, innovating, achieving change and enhancing productivity. The management consultancy industry makes a substantial contribution to the world economy.

The aim of this document is to improve transparency and understanding between clients and management consultancy service providers (hereinafter referred to as MCSPs), in order to achieve better results from consultancy projects. Appropriate application of this document enables MCSPs to provide better value for clients and reduce risk in management consultancy assignments. By improving quality, professionalism, ethical behaviour and interoperability of management consultancy, this document is intended to enhance the effectiveness of the management consulting industry and accelerate the development of the profession.

This document is based on good practice from the management consultancy industry. It includes recommendations to improve the specification, execution, acceptance of the outcome and closure of management consultancy services, based on research and the experience of a wide range of MCSPs and their clients.

This document takes the form of an easy-to-understand guidance document, written from the perspective of management consultancy. It applies to all MCSPs, whatever their size or specialism, including sole proprietors, partnerships, associations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, internal departments of corporations, etc.

Innovation, differentiation and ethical behaviour are important parts of an MCSP's value proposition. This document focuses only on the deliverables and outcomes of management consulting. MCSPs are free to use their own methods and approaches.

This document:

- a) is written as guidance;
- b) is applicable to all MCSPs;
- c) applies to organizations, not their internal resources;
- d) is based on outcomes;
- e) protects innovation and differentiation;
- f) emphasizes the importance of understanding clients' needs;
- g) is easy to understand.

Guidelines for management consultancy services

1 Scope

This document provides guidelines for the effective delivery of management consultancy services.

NOTE Refer to Annex A for supplementary information on ISO standards.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1 agreement

formal binding *outcome* (3.15) (preferably documented in writing) from the *contracting* (3.7) phase

3.2 assignment

service to be provided by the *MCSP* (3.12) to the *client* (3.4) and the *recipient* (3.21) as described in the *agreement* (3.1)

Note 1 to entry: An assignment is typically performed as a *project* (3.18) by the *MCSP* (3.12). Other formats of assignment could be encountered, such as the provision of ongoing support.

3.3 capability

staff, contractors, knowledge, methodology, third parties, technology and other relevant *resources* (3.23) or *processes* (3.17)

3.4 client

organization (3.13) that agrees to the *management consultancy services* (3.11) supplied by the *MCSP* (3.12)

3.5 closure

set of activities between the *MCSP* (3.12), the *client* (3.4) and the *recipient* (3.21) aimed at ending the *assignment* (3.2)

3.6 communication

maintenance between the *MCSP* (3.12) and the *client* (3.4) of clear and systematic flow of information

3.7 contracting

set of activities aimed at reaching an *agreement* (3.1) to provide *MCS* (3.11)

**3.8
deliverable**

tangible item produced by the *MCSP* (3.12) as part of an *assignment* (3.2)

EXAMPLE A report, a plan, a document.

Note 1 to entry: Output is considered synonymous with deliverable.

**3.9
execution**

performance of the *management consultancy service* (3.11)

**3.10
intellectual property**

any identifiable product of the mind attributable to any person(s) or one or more legal entities that can be represented or communicated physically and protectable by copyright or similar laws

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 21000-19:2010, 3.1.28]

**3.11
management consultancy service
MCS
service**

set of multidisciplinary activities of intellectual work, within the field of management, which aims to create value or promote changes, by providing advice and proposing solutions, by taking into account actions or by producing *deliverables* (3.8)

**3.12
management consultancy service provider
MCSP**

organization (3.13) that offers and delivers *management consultancy services* (3.11)

Note 1 to entry: An organization (3.13) acting as a broker or as an introducer (facilitator) of *MCS* (3.11) or providing administrative support (e.g. invoicing, payment of salaries) to MCSPs is not considered an MCSP.

**3.13
organization**

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities, relationships and *resources* (3.23) to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, association, charity or institution or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.2.1]

**3.14
organizational governance**

system by which an *organization* (3.13) makes and implements decisions in pursuit of its objectives

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.13]

**3.15
outcome**

impact or result of an action or *process* (3.17)

EXAMPLE An improvement in profitability or value.

**3.16
policy**

intentions and direction of an *organization* (3.13) as formally expressed by its top management

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.5.8]

3.17**process**

set of interrelated or interacting activities that use inputs to deliver an intended result

Note 1 to entry: Whether the “intended result” of a process is called output (3.8), product, or service (3.11) depends on the context of the reference.

Note 2 to entry: Processes in an *organization* (3.13) are generally planned and carried out under controlled conditions to add value.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.4.1]

3.18**project**

unique *process* (3.17), consisting of a set of coordinated and controlled activities with start and finish dates, undertaken to achieve an objective conforming to specific *requirements* (3.22), including the constraints of time, cost and *resources* (3.23)

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.4.2]

3.19**project governance**

system by which an *organization* (3.13) makes and implements decisions in relation to projects

3.20**project management**

direction of the *project* (3.18) under the authority of *project governance* (3.19)

Note 1 to entry: Project management is the application of methods, tools, techniques and resources to the management of a project and includes the integration of the various phases of the project life cycle. Project management is accomplished through processes.

3.21**recipient**

organization (3.13) receiving the *MCS* (3.11) agreed by the *client* (3.4)

Note 1 to entry: Often the recipient is the client.

3.22**requirement**

need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory

Note 1 to entry: “Generally implied” means that it is custom or common practice for the *organization* (3.13), its customers and other interested parties, that the need or expectation under consideration is implied.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.6.4]

3.23**resources**

assets, people, skills, information, technology (including plant and equipment), premises, supplies and information (whether electronic or not) that an *organization* (3.13) has available to use, when needed, in order to operate and meet its objectives

[SOURCE: ISO 22301:2012, 3.47]

3.24**risk**

effect of uncertainty on objectives

Note 1 to entry: An effect is a deviation from the expected — positive or negative.

Note 2 to entry: Objectives can have different aspects (such as finance, health and safety, security and environment) and can apply at different levels (such as strategic, organization-wide, project, product, and process).

Note 3 to entry: Risk is often characterized by reference to potential events and consequences, or a combination of these.

Note 4 to entry: Risk is often expressed in terms of a combination of the consequences of an event (including changes in circumstances) and the associated likelihood of occurrence.

Note 5 to entry: Uncertainty is the state, even partial, of deficiency of information related to, understanding or knowledge of an event, its consequence, or likelihood.

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 73:2009, 1.1]

3.25

stakeholder

person, group or *organization* (3.13) that has interests in, or can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by, any aspect of the *assignment* (3.2)

Note 1 to entry: Refer to [Annex B](#) for examples of typical stakeholders.

[SOURCE: ISO 21500:2012, 2.14, modified]

4 Principles

4.1 General

4.1.1 Scope

During a typical assignment, the MCSP, the client and recipient jointly undertake three activities described below as the “typical consulting process”.

This document applies to those activities.

This consulting process has a beginning and an end as described below.

4.1.2 Typical consulting process

The consulting process includes three typical activities: contracting, execution and closure, which are described in d), e) and f) in the basic structure of consulting outlined in [Annex C](#).

— Contracting

The client and MCSP reach a clear agreement on the scope and approach of the service to be provided and commit to working together.

This activity starts once the client and the MCSP have reached an understanding of the other party.

[Clause 5](#) offers guidance for contracting.

— Execution

Once agreement has been reached, the next part of the assignment is execution.

The MCSP provides the service in accordance with the agreed approach and plan. The MCSP and the client need to collaborate with confidence, fairness and mutual respect to achieve a mutually positive outcome.

[Clause 6](#) offers guidance for execution.

— Closure

The final stage of the assignment is closure.

After completion of the assignment, including the delivery of all deliverables and assessment of the results, the assignment is “closed” by resolving any unfinished items and meeting all contractual and legal obligations.

It is critical that the MCSP gains acceptance from the client that the assignment is complete.

[Clause 7](#) offers guidance for closure.

NOTE Refer to [Annex C](#) for basic structure of consulting activities.

4.1.3 Responsibilities

The MCSP is responsible for its resources and work, however the ultimate accountability for decisions, outcomes, deliverables and the impacts on stakeholders lies with the client.

NOTE If specified in the agreement, the MCSP might also be responsible and held accountable for outcomes, deliverables or impacts on stakeholders other than the client and the recipient of the MCS.

4.2 Other standards

To deliver management consultancy services effectively, the MCSP should consider guidance provided by other national and international norms and standards relevant to the stakeholders in the assignment. Some standards of relevance include those on project management, ethical behaviour, risk management, business continuity, quality management, safety, and sustainability.

4.3 Ongoing evaluation and improvement

The purpose of evaluation is for the MCSP to assess and determine the effectiveness of the assignment.

Evaluation also allows the client and the MCSP to:

- diagnose the effectiveness of the assignment;
- make recommendations for corrective action;
- implement new processes and methods;
- provide and receive feedback from each other;
- evaluate added value.

The MCSP and client should agree on a suitable methodology for ongoing evaluation and feedback throughout the assignment.

The MCSP should establish a structured process for ongoing evaluation for the duration of the relationship between the client and the MCSP. The effectiveness of the assignment should be assessed based on the evaluation criteria, the policies and strategies included in the agreement.

Even if no evaluation is included in the agreement, the MCSP should have a process to learn from the work it undertakes.

If evaluation is required for contractual reasons to determine the fees paid, the MCSP and the client should agree the most appropriate method of evaluation.