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Good practices for Peer Reviewers

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The Peer Review (PR) process represents a challenging and stimulating task for experts. Having completed our PR, we thought of offering some advice to the experts who are about to take on this task, hoping that those who follow us will continue to update this "Decalogue", which could thus become a shared asset of the project.

1. Understand the Context.

Understanding the economic, demographic, social, and cultural context of where the institution is located is the first essential step to successfully handling PR.

2. Know Your Partner.

PR is managed jointly by two experts. Establishing a good relationship between the two is essential for the success of the process. It can be beneficial to dedicate one or two introductory meetings to understand each other's skills and expertise, thereby fostering a relationship of trust and collaboration.

3. Leverage Differences.

The two experts typically have different backgrounds and professional skills. Even though the PR report is a unified document, it can be advantageous for each expert to focus more on developing the sections that align with their strengths and areas of expertise. This approach ensures that each part of the report benefits from the highest level of professional competence.

4. Cross-Pollinate and Be Flexible.

It is beneficial for each expert to freely and constructively provide feedback on what their partner has developed. This exchange of ideas allows for a richer collaboration, ensuring that the PR benefits from a diverse range of perspectives and ultimately improving the overall quality of the report. Additionally, it is important to set a series of timelines and be extremely flexible in revising them as the work progresses. This flexibility helps to accommodate any unforeseen challenges while ensuring that the project remains on track.

5. Meet in Person.

While technology provides numerous opportunities to collaborate remotely, whenever possible, it is beneficial to meet in person with the institution's leaders and stakeholders involved in the PR process. Direct interaction can offer valuable insights and foster a deeper understanding that enhances the effectiveness of the collaboration.

6. Seek Clarifications.

Experts have access to a vast amount of material and data about the institution, starting with the Regional Analysis. However, there will inevitably be questions that arise. These can often be easily resolved by simply asking for more information. The project partners will be happy to provide answers, making the PR process smoother and more comprehensive.

7. Engage with Stakeholders.

Direct dialogue with stakeholders is crucial for the PR process, as it provides valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of communication policies. It is advisable to organize at least one preliminary introductory meeting and a second meeting to delve deeper into the relevant topics.

8. Prepare Meetings Thoroughly.

Before meeting with stakeholders, it is useful to obtain a list of participants to familiarize yourself with their roles and prepare accordingly. Providing stakeholders with the list of questions in advance allows them to arrive ready to offer the most support to the process. Organizing a roundtable discussion can also be effective in facilitating interaction not only between the experts and stakeholders but also among the stakeholders themselves, helping to generate as many suggestions as possible to enhance the PR. It's important to note that the meetings don't need to be very long; a couple of hours is usually sufficient to maintain focus and ensure that the key objectives are addressed without losing concentration.

9. *Verba Volant, Scripta Manent* (Word fly off, writing remains).

Whenever possible, it is helpful to request a brief written contribution from the partner and/or stakeholders. This allows the document to be reviewed later and facilitates discussion among the experts, starting from a shared reference point. Written inputs help ensure that important points are not lost and can serve as a solid foundation for further analysis.

10. The Art of Drafting.

Even with extensive expertise and productive collaboration between the two experts, the document will likely need multiple revisions before it is ready to be presented to the partners. Even after reaching what is considered a high-quality output, it is beneficial to share it with the partners for their comments and feedback, which are essential for further improving the quality. Therefore, having produced numerous drafts is an excellent indicator of a thorough and robust process.