

Standard Operating Procedures for Headquarters ACR team Annual Country Report Support

Contents

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE.....	1
2. PROCESS AND TIMELINE	1
PHASE 1: PLANNING AND PREPARING.....	1
<i>Step One: Plan the ACR process for the upcoming reporting season, assess capacity gaps and training needs.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Step Two: Review APP MP guidance on the ACR process and circulation to regional bureaux..</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Step Three: Organize trainings and technical support for the upcoming ACR process</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Step Four.a: Validation of CSP classification exercise.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Step Five: Set deadlines</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Step Six: SPRING user access</i>	<i>3</i>
PHASE 2: REVIEWING.....	4
<i>Step Seven: Review ACRs for quality.....</i>	<i>4</i>
PHASE 3: CLEARING AND LEARNING.....	4
STEP EIGHT: ORGANIZE CLEARANCES	4
STEP NINE: LEAD THE PUBLICATION AND ANNUAL REPORTS DATABASE PROCESS	5
STEP TEN: CONDUCT A LESSONS-LEARNED EXERCISE.....	5
3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	5
4 CONTACTS	6

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Annual Country Report (ACR) is an annual Country Strategic Plan (CSP) performance report prepared by WFP country offices worldwide. As per Executive Board agreement, the ACR is the default reporting tool to inform donors on how the resources donated to WFP have been used to achieve results, during the reporting year. The ACRs contribute to WFP's annual corporate statistics and Annual Performance Report and serve as a repository of institutional knowledge. The ACR is distributed to donors and published on wfp.org for public access. The data is used for the Annual Performance Report as well as published on the [WFP operations database](#). ACRs are also a key source of information for evaluations and technical units and a learning tool for country Offices to adapt or adjust future CSPs.

The corporate importance of the ACR lies in how the report tells the story of what WFP has achieved in a specific country and context, in line with the CO implementation plan for the reporting year. Therefore, accurate information and strong narrative are key. These SOP are designed to guide the headquarters team through the ACR process.

Since 2012, the annual report process has been overseen by the Performance Management and Accountability Division (RMP), now the Analysis, Planning & Performance Division (APP). Performance management & reporting (APP MP) continues to coordinate the ACR process following the transition of the annual reports (Standard Project Report) from operational to performance reports (Annual Country Reports).

The APP MP unit offers the second line of support to country offices, for any questions on ACR reporting that the regional bureau needs assistance in answering.

2. PROCESS AND TIMELINE

ACRs report on the period January to December for the year in review and are published on 31 March every year. The reports target donors and cover programme performance for the previous year.

To ensure the success of the ACR process the HQ ACR support team coordinates and is accountable for the following steps.

Phase 1: Planning and Preparing

Step One: Plan the ACR process for the upcoming reporting season, assess capacity gaps and training needs

- Review lessons learned from previous years and assess regional bureau, country office staff needs for managing the ACR process. The assessment should take into account the number of CSPs to be produced in the region and the complexities linked to the operational context.
- Collect and consolidate business requirements based on the previous year's ACR exercise and lessons learned to enhance and upgrade the SPRING platform. This will ensure compliance with TEC standards and improve maintenance and data integration.
- Improve the layout and design of the ACR web-report and pdf document as recommended by feedback from the field.
- Lead the design of enhancements and new features for SPRING to ensure timely testing and operability of the SPRING platform prior to its 'opening' in November.
- Prepare the outline of the ACR for the reporting year, specifying new content. Include any additional guidance that should be developed with the appropriate HQ technical units that are leading on the topic/issue in question. Ensure that the outline reflects the priority areas that have emerged during the reporting year.
- Ensure that the template of the ACR is revised to reflect the contents described in the Outline so that the format of ACRs is conducive to good performance reporting and in meeting donor demands.
- Manage the overall ACR process, including timely communication on guidance material and deadlines, and technical support to regional bureaux and country offices.
- Responsible for setting criteria for the selection of ACRs for headquarters review together with the regional bureaux.

Timing: Before the ACR season from April to July and throughout the cycle of the ACR process

Step Two: Review APP MP guidance on the ACR process

- Review and update the ACR guidance to reflect any changes in corporate frameworks, policies and guidance that were agreed during the reporting year, in consultation with technical units.
- Ensure that any additional guidance needed on emerging priorities is provided with the assistance of the appropriate technical units at HQ. Ensure that these additions are highlighted and shared in a timely fashion with the regional bureaux by said technical units. This will help in aligning RBx preparation/adaptation/development of regionally specific guidance.
- Share the adapted ACR guidance with the regional bureaux.

Step Three: Organize training and technical support for the upcoming ACR process

Timing: September

- Design and deliver global training support based on recommendations for the annual lessons learned exercise, as well as emerging issues.
- Provide support to regional bureau training as needed.
- Provide technical support to regional bureaux and country offices throughout the ACR exercise.
- Organise ad hoc SPRING training for HQ technical units appointed as ACR reviewers.

Timing: At the start of the ACR season, ideally around October. Further trainings may be organized throughout the ACR drafting process and afterwards for year-around learning.

Resources: Training presentations available on the ACR Teams Groups

Step Four - a: Validation of CSP classification exercise

APP MP provides a list of CSPs that require operational ACRs. This list needs to be vetted against country office records. APP MP will coordinate this review with the regional bureau ACR team responsible for coordinating feedback on the list. APP MP confirms the final list of CSPs that require an ACR report and APP MP will take a final decision on any borderline cases. Waivers are decided upon in consultation between the headquarters and regional bureau teams.

Timing: Prior to SPRING system opening, September-October

Step Five: Set deadlines

APP MP sets the final deadline for Regional Directors' approval of the ACRs for their region, and for submission to headquarters of ACRs for headquarters technical review and the Regional Directors' approval.

- Set and manage deadlines for the global ACR process.
- Ensure there is enough time to thoroughly review all ACRs selected for HQ review, send the commented versions back to the regional bureau and country office for revision and then review for a second time to make sure comments were appropriately addressed.
- Provide regular reminders to RBx on deadlines

Timing: Deadlines should be communicated to regional bureaux between September and October

Step Six: SPRING user access

- Deliver the annual SPRING set-up to launch the opening of the platform by the first week of November.
- Coordinate the compilation of accurate user lists for country offices and regional bureau as per the standard format provided.
- Ensure user access is granted prior to the opening of the system in November.
- Ensure that SPRING is recognized as the corporate reporting platform for ACRs and remind regional bureaux and country offices that the use of offline / other systems is discouraged, as they pose a risk to the audit trail and transparency.

Timing: Prior to SPRING system opening in October

Phase 2: Reviewing

Step Seven: Review ACRs for quality

- APP MP is responsible for coordinating the review of ACRs that are earmarked for headquarters review together with headquarters technical units.
- All ACRs selected for this review process will receive a thorough technical review from different units. This can result in more significant revisions and involves APP MP providing additional support to those countries, together with technical units and regional bureaux.
- APP MP will review and organise support to specific country offices where there are technical capacity gaps at the regional bureau level for the review of ACRs. The regional bureau should flag these needs at an early stage to headquarters, ideally by mid-November, so that support can be provided.
- Once all comments from technical reviewers have been received APP MP notifies the regional bureau ACR focal point, who informs the country office and sets a deadline for addressing the comments.
- Once the review has been finalized the reports will be shared with regional bureau management prior to submission for Country Director clearance.

Timing: The ACR review process is from January to March

Phase 3: Clearing and learning

Step Eight: Organize clearances

The clearance process is as follows:

- ACRs are submitted by the country office to the respective regional bureau.
- Regional bureau reverts with any comments.
- Country office reverts with revisions as many times as are necessary, within the prescribed timeframe.
- Headquarters conducts full technical review for HQ review ACRs.
- Country offices and regional bureaux revert with any revisions necessary.
- Country Director clears the ACR and submits it for clearance to the Regional Director.
- Regional Director clears the ACR.
- Regional bureaux publish the ACRs in SPRING.

Timing: All ACRs need to be cleared by the Regional Director at least 15 working days (by 15 March) before the publication date of 31 March

Step Nine: Lead the publication and annual reports database process

- APP MP manages the publication process to produce the web version of the ACR, restricted and public ACR formats.
- APP MP is responsible for the management of and access to all SPRs and ACRs.
- APP MP liaises with relevant units at HQ level to organize dissemination to partners and donors, and with regional bureaux and country offices to provide templates and guidance on their local and regional dissemination plans.

Timing: 31 March

Step Ten: Conduct a lessons-learned exercise

- Following the publication of the ACRs on 31 March, APP MP will conduct a lessons learned exercise on the ACR process that highlights areas for improvement and issues that need to be changed at the global level.
- APP MP will coordinate this exercise with the regional bureaux as they too will conduct a lessons-learned exercise on the ACR process.

Timing: April - June

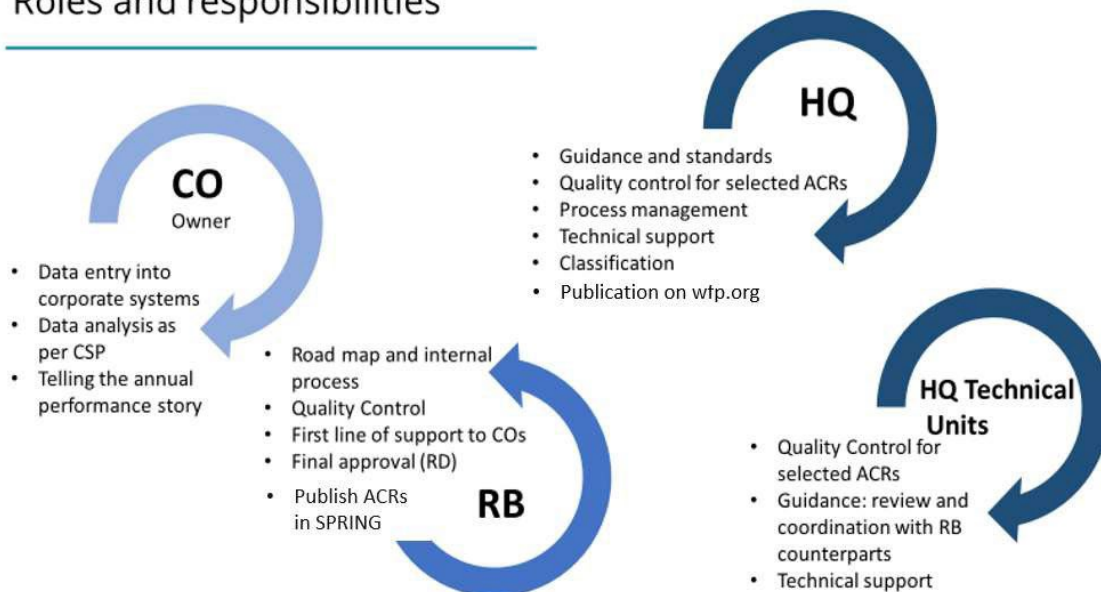
Resources: Previous year's lessons learned

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The HQ ACR team has 4 people working on coordinating the annual ACR exercise. The ACR Coordinator is the head of the team, while other members of the team function as focal points for specific regional bureaux and technical areas of WFP's work. The team also provides systems support for SPRING and liaises with TEC to ensure that updates and automation requests are addressed and tested in time to meet the needs of the ACR preparation cycle.

APP MP is responsible for the quality control of ACRs selected for HQ review, technical support, establishment of guidance and standards and overall management of the process. Details of the process are described in the steps above.

Roles and responsibilities



4. CONTACTS

For all communications related to the SPRING platform, please contact HQ.SPRING@wfp.org.

Support on content related issues and technical support is provided by the designated ACR regional bureau focal point in HQ ACR team: HQACR_Team@wfp.org.

For any query related to ACRs and SPRs historical repository please contact wfp.annualreportqueries@wfp.org.

COMET support for Country Offices should come from the COMET regional bureau focal points. If the regional bureau focal point is unable to address the issue, then HQ.COMETsupport@wfp.org may be contacted.