

Project Administration Handbook for Civil Engineering Works**2024 Edition****AMENDMENT NO. 2/2026****CHAPTER 1 PROJECT PLANNING****PARAGRAPH I ABBREVIATION**

- (a) Abbreviation **Insert abbreviation “SIA Sewerage Impact Assessment”.**

PARAGRAPH 1 OVERVIEW

- (b) Para. 1.5 **Insert the following paragraph after paragraph 1:**

In undertaking a public works consultancy assignment, consultants are usually required to seek comments on their deliverables from various parties, including the project team (which may comprise different levels of vetting), departmental vetting committees, approval authorities (such as for EIA, TIA, DIA, SIA, etc.), advisory bodies, maintenance parties and relevant stakeholders, in order to secure the acceptance of the deliverables by the project team. In the process, it is not uncommon for consultants to encounter difficult situations, particularly in resolving conflicting comments offered by different parties. If such situations are not managed properly, it may lead to abortive work, lengthen the deliverables’ acceptance timeline and even delay the overall project progress.

Against the above background, the following guiding principles are set out for observance by relevant bureaux and departments (“B/Ds”) in processing submissions made by consultants:

Guiding Principles

While individual B/Ds may assume different roles in a public works project (e.g. managing department, approval authority or maintenance party), it is important for them to uphold a “one-government” principle and embrace an “ownership” mindset in pursuit of common goals, such that the project can meet the objectives in respect of functionality, time, cost and quality without compromising safety and regulatory standards. Following the principles promulgated in DEVB General Circular No. 1/2024, officers in B/Ds should adopt a facilitating and collaborative mindset to expedite acceptance or approval of consultants’ submissions. In essence, comments on consultants’ submissions should be clear, necessary for and relevant to the intended purposes and the stage of work concerned as well as essential and practical from a value-for-money perspective so as not to compromise overall project cost-effectiveness or result in undue time and cost implications. Where a submission is rejected, the reasons for the rejection should be clearly spelt out to enable the consultant to

make timely re-submission accordingly. Where appropriate, meetings should be arranged with consultants to address the issues directly, thereby facilitating more efficient processing of the consultants' submissions and minimising rounds of correspondence among the parties concerned. See Chapter 4 of the PAH for the good practices to be adopted by B/Ds in processing submissions made by consultants. (Ref.: SDEV's memo ref. () in DEVBWB WP4S-022-002-002 dated 29.5.2026.)

PARAGRAPH 9 REFERENCES

- (c) **Add** SDEV's memo ref. () in DEVBWB WP4S-022-002-002 dated 29.5.2026 Guidelines on Vetting Consultants' Submissions

CHAPTER 4 PROJECT DESIGN AND ESTIMATES

PARAGRAPH 1 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DESIGN

Para. 1.10

Insert a new paragraph 1.10 with the following:

1.10 GOOD PRACTICES IN PROCESSING SUBMISSIONS

In line with the guiding principles outlined in Chapter 1 of the PAH, project teams and relevant bureaux and departments should adopt the following good practices when processing submissions to facilitate the implementation of public works projects.

1.10.1 Provision of comments

A deliverable distribution matrix listing the relevant parties to be invited to provide comments on each deliverable (e.g. approval authorities, maintenance parties, managing departments / organisations of interfacing projects, etc.) shall be included in the Inception Report for comments and agreement by them. During the first circulation of each deliverable, it would be helpful for the project team or the consultants to highlight specific aspects on which input is required from individual bureaux and departments or parties, where appropriate.

The project team and relevant bureaux and departments should aim to provide specific and substantive comments in a single comprehensive response and avoid multiple rounds of vetting. Technical-related comments should be accompanied by the rationale with reference document/guideline quoted where applicable. Any comments not included in the first substantive reply but conveyed to the consultants subsequently should be based on new information or developments that were not available at the time the earlier comments were issued. All key requirements and requests for supplementary information should be clearly stated in the first substantive reply and should not be raised at a later stage unless absolutely necessary. Any new requirements introduced at a later stage (including handing over of completed works to

maintenance parties), if required, should be cleared by a D1 officer or above.

The focus of vetting should be on the substance of the submissions. The project team and relevant bureaux and departments should avoid spending excessive time on commenting the use of language, unless it affects the clarity of the content or the submissions when accepted are intended for publication in the public domain. Where appropriate, suggestions would be provided on how the comments raised or deficiencies identified in the submissions could be addressed. Inconsistent or contradictory comments across different rounds of vetting should be avoided unless supported by strong justifications, where clearance from a D1 officer or above should be obtained.

In dealing with conflicting comments from different parties, the project team, which holds the overall responsibility for managing the consultancy agreement, should collaborate closely with the consultant to resolve the issues with the relevant parties. In such cases, the relevant parties concerned should assist in revisiting their comments and exploring ways to reconcile the differences in a holistic manner, with due regard to the “**one-government**” principle and “**ownership**” mindset as mentioned above. Should the issues remain unresolved, the project team should bring up the issues for high-level steer according to the internal escalation mechanism in a timely manner.

1.10.2 Monitoring of vetting process

When devising the submission schedule of deliverables in the Scope, the project team should set a reasonable time frame between the submission of the first draft and the acceptance of the final version for each deliverable. This should form the basis of the initial programme of the deliverable concerned, which should be adhered to unless a revised programme is subsequently accepted.

Excessive vetting layers should be avoided. For **relatively straightforward deliverables**, the project team should aim to have them finalised **in one round of vetting** as far as practicable or otherwise within a short timeframe even if more than one round is required. For example, the Inception Report may be deemed accepted within three months of the first submission when the major principles have been agreed by the project team. Subsequent changes to the details, if any, can be agreed through an exchange of correspondence or recorded in the minutes of progress meetings.

Even for **more complicated deliverables**, the project team in collaboration with the consultant should endeavour to address all the comments **within two to three rounds of vetting**, depending on the complexity of the deliverables concerned and the number of parties to be consulted. The indicative number of rounds stated above is not intended to provide grounds for extending the vetting process. Both the project team and the consultant should seek to resolve comments in a progressive and convergent manner, even where an additional round of vetting is

required.

To facilitate monitoring of submissions and approval workflow of deliverables, the project team should make good use of the **Digital Project Delivery System (DPDS)**, where applicable.

Where additional rounds of vetting are required due to poor quality of the deliverables, the project team should require the consultant to make improvements and duly reflect this in its quarterly performance reports.

1.10.3 Making use of the Early Warning Register

In handling issues that may affect the timely acceptance of the consultant's deliverables, giving rise to time and cost implications, both the project team and the consultant should make good use of the Early Warning Register in the New Engineering Contract Professional Service Contract to record them and monitor the progress of follow-up actions. The Early Warning Register should be included in the monthly progress report and discussed as a standing item at regular progress meetings.

For consultancies in other contract forms, project teams should also adopt a similar Early Warning Register system for monitoring of the progress of follow-up actions on consultant's deliverables.

1.10.4 Setting of an internal escalation mechanism

The project team should set up an internal escalation mechanism for each project for handling unresolved issues to prevent undue delays, in particular for deliverables that contain findings with a validity period (e.g. tree survey, traffic survey, etc.). For such deliverables, delay in acceptance may possibly lead to re-doing the tasks by the consultant, thereby incurring additional costs or even delaying the project. For typical deliverables, a suggested timeframe for escalating unresolved issues, once registered in the Early Warning Register, is set out in the table below. However, bureaux and departments can assign different escalation timeframes, having regard to the project programme and the criticality of the deliverables concerned.

Timeframe	Escalation to respective rank of officers
2 weeks	Senior Professional
1 month	D1 officer
3 months	D2 officer or above

In the event that the issues remain unresolved at departmental level after going through the above escalation mechanism, or for special or urgent cases, the managing department overseeing the consultancy agreement should bring up the issues to relevant bureaux for attention and steer.

1.10.6 Information Sharing

Where appropriate, bureaux and departments would compile a summary of common pitfalls identified in submissions for consultants' reference. These measures would help minimise deficiencies in future submissions.

PARAGRAPH 6 REFERENCES

Add SDEV's memo ref. () in DEVBWB WP4S-022-002-002 dated 29.5.2026 Guidelines on Vetting Consultants' Submissions

**Technical Secretariat Unit
Civil Engineering and Development Department
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