

WCO Policy Document

Management and Mobilization of WCO Experts

Introduction

The WCO is committed to providing effective capacity building support to its Members, as highlighted in its mission and strategic plan.

To achieve this objective, it has developed a network of qualified experts from amongst its Members and associates who can be called upon to assist the WCO in the delivery of capacity building activities. This document explains the WCO's basic policy around the management of these experts. The Capacity Building Directorate (CBD) is responsible for its execution, with support from the Virtual Working Group (VWG) on the Deployment of Experts and the Capacity Building Committee (CBC).

To satisfy Member requests for assistance in a timely manner, the WCO uses a pool of Accredited Experts, Recognized Experts, and External Experts/Expert Consultants. This policy document defines each of the categories and provides an overview of the accreditation process, the mobilization process, and how the Accredited Customs Experts (ACE) database is used to manage the pool of experts.

Overview of Accredited Expert Categories

There are six overall categories of WCO Accredited Expert, noting that a number of experts may be listed in more than one category. The categories are:

- (i) Diagnostic Facilitators (DF)
- (ii) Customs Modernization Advisors (CMA)
- (iii) Mercator Programme Advisors (MPA)
- (iv) Technical and Operational Advisors (TOA)
- (v) Expert Trainers (ET)
- (vi) Leadership and Management Development Advisors (LMDA)

Diagnostic Facilitators (DF's) are experienced Customs officials with a strong understanding of the WCO Customs Capacity Building Strategy and the WCO Customs Capacity Building Diagnostic Framework. DF's undertake holistic organizational assessments or review organizational reform and modernization programmes.

Customs Modernization Advisors (CMA's) are experienced Customs officials who possess the capacity to accompany, guide and mentor organizations towards planning, implementing and evaluating reforms and modernization activities and processes. This requires experts with a broad understanding of matters related organizational development, as well as enforcement, compliance and trade facilitation.

Mercator Programme Advisors (MPA's) form a specialized CMA category to describe experts who have the required traditional CMA skills but have also demonstrated the skills and knowledge to assist Members with implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), particularly at a strategic level. They are called upon to support administrations with organizational (or Government) gap analysis, planning and implementation of the TFA.

Technical and Operational Advisors (TOA's) have sound technical and subject matter expertise and engage with middle and senior management to provide advice on organizational development of specific programmes or projects. For example, setting up an IPR unit or establishing an AEO programme. There are currently fourteen TOA areas of expertise, as follows.

- Authorized Economic Operators (AEO)
- Data Model (DM)
- Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
- Post Clearance Audit (PCA)
- Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC)
- Risk Management (RM)
- Single Window (SW)
- Tariff & Trade Affairs (TTA) – Revenue Package
- Time Release Study (TRS)
- Transit
- Customs Enforcement Network Applications (CEN/nCEN/CENcomm)
- Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT)
- Customs Laboratories
- E-commerce

Expert Trainers (ET's) specialize in specific Customs technical subjects such as Valuation, Origin and the Harmonized System and typically conduct classroom training events. They are practitioners with a high level of technical expertise in a specific core Customs area, and the methodological training ability to generate learning of others. ET's deliver learning events and provide related coaching and mentoring.

ET's also deliver specialized training in some specific WCO initiatives such as Project Global Shield, WCO/UNODC Container Control Programme (CCP), Strategic Trade Controls Enforcement (STCE) Programme and the WCO Inama Project (controlled delivery, investigation and operation planning and command training).

Leadership and Management Development Advisors (LMDA's) are specialists in leadership and management development, leading to organizational development. They are particularly skilled in facilitating learning and development for middle and senior managers. They have knowledge of the environment in which Customs operates and good experience in management development and training. LMDA's are Customs managers with very strong facilitation and communication skills.

Information sharing, exchanges and updates amongst the expert community are conducted through on-going dialogue, meetings and on the WCO CLiKC! platform.

WCO Recognized Experts

Recognized Expert status is only ever afforded to serving Officers from WCO Member administrations.

WCO Recognized Experts are typically specialized in an area that is not covered by the WCO accreditation areas sub categories. They may not have undergone a formal WCO accreditation process, but they are known experts in a particular field and have a proven track record of effective delivery on behalf of the WCO.

A typical profile of a Recognized Expert includes:

- Customs and international knowledge and experience;
- Practical experience in applying and implementing new Customs measures or processes;
- Customs modernization and strategic planning knowledge and experience;
- Experience as an advisor, facilitator, mentor or coach;
- Experience in drafting plans, project or program proposals; and
- Excellent oral, written and IT communication skills.

WCO Lead Officials, in collaboration with the WCO Regional Development Managers (RDMs) are responsible for identifying and managing the performance and deployment of Recognized Experts and ensuring that they are keeping their Customs knowledge up to date.

External Experts / Expert Consultants

External Experts are typically formerly WCO Accredited Experts who are no longer serving in a Member administration. Former Customs Officers with relevant experience, knowledge and/or endorsement from the WCO are also referred to as External Experts.

Expert Consultants may be either former Customs officials who were never formally WCO accredited or may be professionals who have not worked for a Customs administration but have proven expertise and experience that is not available through other means.

External Experts/Expert Consultants can be from the private sector, academia, international organizations and non-government organizations. External Experts/Expert Consultants are only ever approached when a WCO Accredited Expert or a WCO Recognized Expert from a Member administration is unavailable, or there is a very specific reason why it is necessary to invite someone externally.

The overriding reason to exceptionally use an external resource is to ensure that the high standard of WCO delivery support to Members continues to be maintained at all times. As is the case for all WCO experts, the performance of External Experts/Expert Consultants must be quality assured to ensure these delivery standards are being met.

The decision to propose the use of External Experts/Expert Consultants rests with each WCO Director with guidance from his or her Directorate, RDM's and/or Programme/Project Managers, depending on the specific needs and circumstances. The final decision to deploy an External Expert or Expert Consultant rests with the relevant WCO Deputy Director.

When considering the deployment of an External Expert or an Expert Consultant who is a former Customs official, the WCO responsible official must first contact the former Customs administration to determine the circumstances surrounding the termination of that previous employment.

It is necessary for all External Experts to agree, sign and abide by the terms of the formal employment contract drawn up by the WCO that is comprehensive and includes specific sections relating to their terms of reference, expected results and their code of conduct. This applies to both paid and unpaid service and is to ensure external individuals fully understand their role and responsibilities when representing the WCO, including avoiding conflicts of interests.

WCO Accreditation Process

Accredited Expert status is only afforded to serving Officers from WCO Member administrations in the six identified categories. The accreditation of practitioners in the range of topics needed is conducted by a WCO Lead Official appointed from the Secretariat, in close consultation with a CBD official. These officials have experience and knowledge of international standards and maintain the instruments, tools and guidelines relevant to their specific Customs topic.

The WCO has developed a structured three-phased approach to the accreditation process that includes:

- (i) Pre-assessment of candidates;
- (ii) Successful participation at a WCO accreditation workshop; and
- (iii) Evaluation during a mission with a WCO Staff Member or another WCO Accredited Expert.

Formal WCO accreditation commences from the date the expert candidate successfully completes a mission with a mission lead, who formally assesses his or her performance. Member administrations commit to release officials for a maximum of twelve weeks over an initial three-year period following their successful formal accreditation. When Pre-accredited Experts represent the WCO they should be considered in the same light as a WCO Accredited Expert, provided they have the proven necessary expertise and experience.

For all experts, as well as updates through Newsletters and the CLiKC! platform, the WCO may arrange refresher events and consider other refresher options as necessary. Refresher events/requirements should be directed by WCO Lead Officials in collaboration with the CBD Regional Development Managers (RDM's) and the Regional Offices for Capacity Building (ROCB's).

Mobilization Process

The CBD has the responsibility to develop the Annual Capacity Building Delivery Plan based on the annual needs assessments of Members and funding. This plan can be used to identify and prioritize (in line with agreed criteria) suitable experts to support activities. RDM's and Lead Officials collaborate to execute this plan.

When matching suitable experts to planned missions, the Secretariat should first ensure that the expert has the relevant skills and knowledge for the mission. Second, priority should be given to experts who are pre-accredited in order to provide an opportunity to achieve full accreditation. In the first instance, Accredited Experts or Recognized Experts should always be considered and used. External Experts should only ever be deployed as a last resort. When possible, experts should be deployed within their own region and consideration should also be given to those with the longest time period since their last WCO mission.

The assignment of experts for mission delivery follows a number of necessary steps, such as confirmation of the availability of funding to sponsor the activity, an indication of possible dates for delivery, consultations with the relevant administration to release the expert, and processing the mission request for logistics preparations.

Prior to writing to a WCO Member administration to invite one or more of their experts to assist on a mission, the WCO Lead Official should make informal contact with the National Contact Point (NCP) designated by each Member administration. Lead Officials should endeavor to provide as much notice as possible and NCP's should endeavor to provide a response in a timely fashion.

Once an expert's availability is confirmed, a letter signed by the WCO Director with responsibility for the subject-matter, should be sent seeking formal release of the expert to either the administration's Director-General or the NCP.

A formal invitation to assist on a mission should not be sent directly to an expert.

The ROCBs and RTCs should also follow this policy and coordinate all engagement in relation to WCO experts through the CBD

Accredited Customs Experts (ACE) database

The ACE database lists all six categories of Accredited Expert including the sub-categories, the Recognized Experts, and the External Experts/Expert Consultants.

The ACE database is maintained on a secure platform with restricted read and edit access within the WCO CBD. Read only access is provided to all WCO Deputy Directors and each WCO Lead Official.

WCO Lead Officials/Co-facilitators should provide feedback on an expert's performance and conduct, as well as the number of missions the individual completes. This information is recorded in the ACE database.

Upon request of a Member administration, information on particular missions conducted in its territory or where one of its national officials has participated, may be shared, prior to the approval of a WCO Deputy Director.

The ACE database also records the details of Pre-accredited Experts. These are serving Officers who have successfully attended a formal WCO accreditation workshop and are waiting for the opportunity to conduct a mission with a qualified WCO Staff Member or another Accredited Expert in order to finalize the accreditation process.

ROCB's and Regional Training Centres (RTC's) are only provided non-nominal data associated with their region when requesting ACE database information through their RDM. The CBD Director or Deputy Director can exceptionally consider written requests from ROCB's and RTC's concerning nominal information about experts.

It is important that the ACE database is continuously kept up to date. Member administrations are responsible for keeping a record of its own experts and informing the WCO of any changes that affect the status of any of their experts. A complete refresh administered by the WCO will be conducted every five years with the input and assistance of the WCO Membership.