

WCO Asia Pacific Regional Framework for Effective Use of Regional Expertise



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**WCO Asia Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building
(ROCB A/P)**

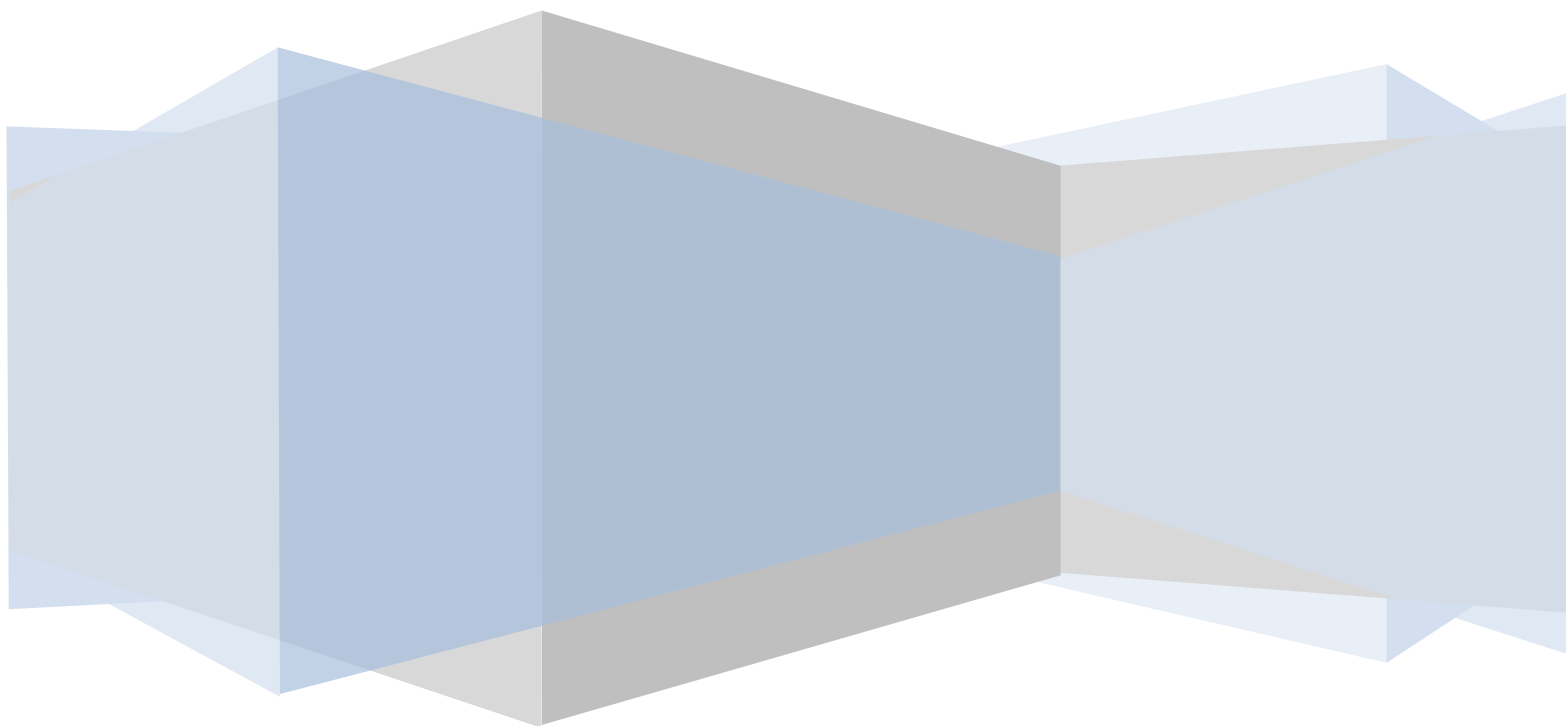


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I. Introduction

1.1 Background

Neighbors share similar circumstances, encounter similar problems and face similar challenges, and this brings potential and necessity for information exchanging and experience sharing. In its capacity building strategy, the WCO has adopted the regionalization approach, since the needs of regional Customs administrations will be better to satisfy through regional cooperation. It is well recognized that competent and dedicated experts in the key Customs development areas are at the core of effective and sustainable capacity building.

Committed to meaningful and relevant Capacity Building assistance to its Members and solve the problem of resource constraints, the WCO counts on two key factors in this endeavor. Firstly, the WCO has developed a network of partners within the donor community and with experts amongst its Members who contribute to the WCO Capacity Building. Secondly, the WCO manages a pool of the WCO accredited experts and has taken steps to prepare them for their delivery of WCO Capacity Building.

For the purpose of assessment and quality assurance of WCO expertise through the process of accreditation, the concerned member experts should meet pre-defined standards as assessed in a workshop environment and in-field missions. Then the WCO grants these experts an accredited status and includes them in the database of the WCO accredited experts. In Asia Pacific region, such pool of WCO accredited experts is growing steadily. How to take full advantage of these experts is both necessary and helpful to undertake regional capacity building initiatives.

Under the 2010-2012 Regional Strategic Plan, the regional Customs leaders have tasked ROCB to “develop a framework to pool, utilize, support and increase accredited experts in the region.” In the 8th and 9th Asia Pacific Regional Training Center (RTC) Head Meeting, representatives from all the six WCO Asia Pacific Regional Training Centers (RTCs) contributed to this task by discussing the major points which should be covered in such framework. In this context, ROCB develops the framework for better use of regional experts, aiming for more effective and sustainable regional Customs capacity building.

1.2 Definition and scope of application

For the purpose of this framework, regional experts fall into two categories. The first category covers Customs officials from member administrations who have been formally accredited by the WCO through the above-mentioned accreditation processes. These experts are called in this framework as “WCO accredited experts”.

Second category extends to Customs officials in our region who are known by ROCB that he/she possesses solid expertise on relevant Customs topics, such as K9, NII, Integrity. So far, accreditation workshops on limited Customs topics have been conducted but these known expertise may also be used in the region for the effective capacity building paying due attention to the WCO/ROCB rules and procedures. These experts are expected to be used in the Asia Pacific Region to complement the WCO accredited experts. As they are at the same time the candidates for the future accreditation by the WCO, we hereinafter call these experts in this framework as “candidate”. (See paragraph 2.2 (2) below)

This framework is basically applicable for those two categories of experts to be used for the missions under the WCO/ROCB scheme.

II. How to pool regional experts

2.1 Current number of accredited experts

The WCO has pooled the various WCO accredited experts under the umbrella of Accredited Customs Experts (ACE). Linking to the WCO Columbus Program and the implementation of the SAFE framework, the ACEs are grouped into four: Customs Diagnosticians, Customs Modernization Advisors (CMA), Accredited Trainers (AT) and Technical and Operational Advisors (TOA) (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1: The WCO Accredited Customs Experts



Source: WCO 1st Capacity Building Committee meeting document, 2010.

Table 1: Accredited Experts and Main Responsibility

Expert Category	Responsibility
Diagnostic Facilitator (DF)	Conduct Diagnostic missions under Phase I of the Columbus Program
Customs Modernization Advisor (CMA)	Experts on institution building, human resources and change management, and facilitate interaction with donors and/or other relevant stakeholders.
Accredited Trainer (AT)	Specialized in core Customs technical and operational areas, like, in the area of HS, Customs Valuation, ROO, IPR with the methodological training ability to generate learning for others. These experts are expected to support the delivery of training in the WCO Regional Training Centers
Technical and Operational Advisor (TOA)	Possess high level of technical expertise in a specific core customs topic, such as NII, Authorized Economic Operators or the Revised Kyoto Convention At current stage the WCO caters for experts` accreditation of TOAs in the area of AEO, RKC and Data Model.

Source: WCO 2nd Capacity Building Committee meeting document, 2011.

The current pooling and distribution of ACEs in Asia Pacific is summarized in Table 2. Considering the increasing needs in particular on the variety of Technical and Operational Advisors (TOAs) to improve customs operations, ROCB needs further efforts to work with the WCO Secretariat to fill the gap between the latest regional needs and the existing expertise. While recognizing the regional needs of experts will be changed from time to time, judging from the latest needs identified through ROCB operation, it is clear that we need more experts for AEO, PCA and IPR in our region. It seems also to be important to collect information on the existing expertise on various areas that includes, but not limited to, NII, Integrity and K9. From the experience of ROCB, it is desirable if we can pool at least 3 to 5 experts for the respective areas to provide smooth and effective capacity building.

Table 2: Summary of WCO Accredited Experts in the AP region (as of March 2012)

Types of Experts & Area of expertise		Fully Accredited	1 st Step	Total
Diagnostic Facilitators (DF)		49	-	49
Customs Modernization Advisors (CMA)		12	11	23
Accredited Trainer (AT)	HS	9	-	9
	Valuation	12	-	12
	PCA	2	-	2
	Rules of Origin	2	-	2
Technical and Operational Advisor (TOA)	AEO	3	7	10
	RKC	4	-	4
	IPR	5	-	5
	Data Model	1	1	2
Total		99	19	118

Source: Consolidated from the WCO Accredited Customs Experts Database (ACE) and further information provided by the WCO Secretariat.

Note: 1. "Fully Accredited" means the experts have been accredited as the WCO Accredited Experts and their information has been entered into the WCO Accredited Customs Experts Database (ACE).

2. "1st step" means the experts have been selected during accreditation workshops but they still need to accomplish field missions to be fully accredited.

3. Those who are accredited for two or more areas, they are counted at the relevant areas respectively.

Table 3: List of AP Regional Accreditation Workshops (as of March 2012)

Kind of Accreditation workshops	Time
Diagnostic Facilitators	October 2005
Diagnostic Facilitators	December 2006
HS expert trainers	November 2008
Customs Modernization Advisors	February 2009
Valuation expert trainers	March 2009
Customs Modernization Advisors	March 2010
HS expert trainers	April 2010
Valuation expert trainers	June 2010
HS expert trainers	June 2011
AEO expert	December 2011

Note: In addition, accreditation of workshops on for example ROO, IPR, AEO and RKC and Data Model have been conducted at the WCO Secretariat in Brussels and a number of regional experts have been successfully accredited.

2.2 Strategy to pool regional experts

(1) Keeping and updating the information about ACEs is a key to further utilization. It is well recognized that a centralized database in this respect is much helpful to pool the WCO accredited experts. To promote transparency and accessibility of ACEs, the WCO Secretariat has developed the WCO Accredited Customs Experts Database, in which the relevant information of ACEs is recorded and updated. ROCB and regional members can access this database through the WCO members' web-site and search experts. Taking the WCO effort in this aspect, it is not necessary to build up the regional ACEs database separately.

(2) However, for the purpose of pooling more experts in our region, in particular for those areas that have not yet covered by the WCO accreditation workshops in the past, ROCB will require information on the Customs officials who have solid expertise on Customs topics to create "candidate list" for possible participation to the future accreditation workshop. For this purpose, regional members are encouraged to communicate with ROCB to recommend their own capable experts to be placed on this list whenever appropriate. ROCB will take responsibility to maintain the "candidate list". The experts to be placed on "candidate list" should meet the following requirements.

- Expertise in certain customs topics (such as NII, Integrity, K9)
- Fluency in English
- Experience in capacity building
- Experience/knowledge of the WCO and WCO instruments/tools

2.3 Center of excellence

In Asia Pacific region, all the six RTCs have identified and selected the specific areas for development (see Table 4) to establishing RTC as Center of Excellence. It is useful if this Center of Excellence concept could be closely linked to the regional expertise. There is no doubt that the good combination of expertise of "regional experts" and knowledge/information of "center of excellence" could create better environment for high-level capacity building. The WCO accredited experts of the host administration of RTC can contribute to both international and domestic training. It is suggested that RTCs recommend their good trainers to be included in the "candidate list" mentioned in paragraph 2.2 (2) above as one way to establish this environment.

Table 4: The WCO RTC as Center of Excellence in Asia Pacific (as of March 2012)

RTC Host Administration	Specific Areas Focused	
China	Valuation	Classification
Hong Kong, China	Risk Management	Integrity
India	Drug Enforcement	Environment
Japan	AEO	IPR
Korea	ICT	Single Window
Malaysia	Strategic Management	Post Clearance Audit

III. How to utilize regional experts

In a typical scenario, utilizing regional experts mainly means inviting experts to lead and/or join a mission in foreign countries; however, other related activities can also be involved. This part will highlight key aspects of what and how a regional expert can contribute to a regional capacity building initiative.

3.1 Role of regional experts

Based on the regional needs and expectation, all regional experts are expected to contribute over the below activities:

- *Involving WCO/ROCB missions:* contributing agenda setting, introducing the WCO instruments and tools, sharing best practice, leading discussion, conducting follow-up guidance , offer distance or online guidance;
- *Attending the projects sponsored by other international institutions:* attending the mission s on behalf of the WCO and/or ROCB;
- *Conducting in-house training in home administration:* sharing expertise within their home administration;
- *Offer distance or online guidance:* Upon the request of member administrations and under the coordination of ROCB, offer advice or guidance over the concerned expertise area through emails, phone call or electronic means.
- *Self-improvement:* keeping updated with development of concerned topics; regular access to new modules of the WCO e-learning program; exchanging information with the concerned WCO officers, surfing the WCO Experts Guidelines and etc.

“Candidate” under the paragraph 2.2 (2) may also be invited to join missions under the WCO/ROCB subject to the confirmation made by the relevant parties involved, such as the WCO Secretariat, ROCB, donor or recipient countries. If they participate in the mission

under the WCO/ROCB scheme, he/she shall be required, in principle, to follow the rules and procedures specified in the section III (How to utilize regional experts) of this framework. Conditions applicable, such as cost or reporting requirement may be different from mission to mission based on the different donor requirement. In this case, ROCB is going to specify those particulars to his/her home administrations when inviting them to the missions. The participation to those missions is at the discretion of his/her home administrations.

3.2 Condition on the use of regional experts

As for WCO accredited experts, as announced in the WCO invitation letters on selecting candidates for accreditation, the home administration is expected to permit the WCO to use the WCO accredited expert for the maximum of 12-week period over 3 years if the candidate has been successfully accredited. Taking this into consideration, the home administration is expected to make positive consideration, wherever possible, to permit the WCO accredited experts to join the mission when requested by the WCO and/or ROCB.

It is stressed that while serving in the WCO/ROCB missions, the WCO accredited experts are on behalf of the WCO, not their home administration. During the mission, the experts may refer to home country experience; however, it should be done in a balanced or neutral way.

3.3 Cost of sending regional experts

While conducting the missions within this framework, the WCO accredited experts will receive the same treatment as WCO and/or ROCB staff in terms of financial support. The cost for the experts consists of two parts. The first part is flight cost from their home country to the recipient country. Usually, only the shortest and most direct route should be used. The second part is per diem to cover accommodation, transportation and other concerned cost. The calculation is subject to the WCO staff rules and regulations. All these costs will be covered by the WCO unless otherwise offered by the other financial institutions or member administrations.

As for “candidate” mentioned in the paragraph 2.2 (2), the cost of their participation to the mission will be subject to the discussion among the WCO, ROCB, donor, home administration and beneficiary country.

From the ROCB experience, if beneficiary country can bear the expert cost for inviting regional experts, in particular for ad-hoc request, such arrangement would greatly facilitate the consultation with the WCO, ROCB and the host administration of regional experts. As such, this point should clearly be indicated in the request letter. ROCB developed the rough cost estimation for inviting experts for reference purpose. Interested members may consult with the ROCB in this regard.

3.4 Process of inviting regional experts

If regional experts is financed by the WCO, the steps of inviting regional experts generally follows:

Step 1: The WCO Secretariat, through ROCB A/P, receives a request on capacity building from a regional member through capacity building needs survey or ad-hoc request and incorporates such request into the annual corporate plan;

Step 2: If proper experts in the Secretariat can't be identified, the WCO Secretariat resort to the ACE database and, in consultation with ROCB A/P, search the proper experts;

Step 3: The WCO Secretariat and/or ROCB informally consult the availability of the selected experts.

Step 4: If proper experts are identified for the mission, the WCO Secretariat will send a formal letter to the home administration to give approval to use the experts.

Step 5: The home administration makes response to the request. It is expected that this request be given positive consideration for approval.

Step 6: If it is necessary to form a facilitator team, the contact point of the WCO Secretariat or team leader will formally contact the experts to start to prepare for the mission.

Step 7: The selected experts prepare mission material such as agenda and presentations, in cooperation with the WCO Secretariat and ROCB. Commonly the experts receive information on the action background, their required input and the desired result of this mission with action Terms of References. Finally, he/she actually joins the mission.

3.5 Report of the mission

After the mission, the regional experts need to submit a mission report to the WCO Secretariat and/or ROCB based on the WCO standard template. The main contents of such report should include: purpose of the mission, participants profile, main activities, initial feedback & outcomes, future needs and etc.

IV. How to support regional Experts

It is important to stress that maintenance and further improvement of expertise of regional experts, in particular the “candidate”, is a key for the successful regional cooperation on capacity building. To make better use of regional experts, it is never business of a single party. A stakeholder approach should be taken and each party needs to play its bit and

cooperate closely. The combined efforts of all parties involved, is expected to result in the further improvement of capability of WCO accredited experts as well as the capability of “candidate” for the future successful WCO accreditation.

- *Home administration:*, Home administration is expected to commit providing regional experts as much opportunities as possible to attend the regional capacity building activities and, where possible, relevant WCO meetings. It is important to note that home administration ensures regional experts to be actively involved in the domestic training. Home administration is also encouraged to properly reflect his/her contribution to his/her performance evaluation in their home administration, and where possible, to establish reward and incentive system.
- *ROCB:* ROCB serves as the major hub and platform to utilize the regional experts and to extend the ‘expert network’ to generate new knowledge, share and disseminate best practices in the region. It should encourage using region experts for the regional projects, enhancing communication regularly with accredited experts; inviting regional experts to conduct best practice study; inviting regional experts to contribute articles on ROCB e-newsletter. ROCB will seek possibility, in cooperation with the WCO Secretariat, to provide opportunities for regional experts to maintain and/or further improve their expertise. ROCB should also be considered as a single contact point from regional experts wherever they expect certain support from the WCO/ROCB.
- *RTC:* As suggested by paragraph 2.2, RTC is expected to establish closer link between their center of excellence and regional expertise. It is also recommend their good trainers to be used for their both international and domestic training and to be included in the “candidate list” mentioned also in paragraph 2.2(2). RTC is also expected to provide information and data accumulated at the “center of excellence”, where available, to regional experts. RTC is further expected, where appropriate, to provide training to improve the expertise and knowledge of “candidate” for future accreditation;
- *WCO Secretariat:* WCO Secretariat is expected to ensure that WCO accredited experts have access to WCO documents and instruments/tools and provide up-to-date information relevant for the respective WCO missions and through overall advisory support (experts newsletters, experts guidelines etc,) upon request, on the WCO policy as well as the WCO documents, tools and instruments to the regional experts. The CLiKC platform has been developed to provide excellent opportunity for this purpose and for enhancing network among WCO accredited experts. It is also expected to updating ACE database upon request and agreement by members. It is also expected to consult closely with the ROCB and conduct further accreditation workshops paying due attention to the needs and priority of the region. The WCO Secretariat is also expected to work together with ROCB to support the “candidate” under the paragraph 2.2(2), where appropriate.

V. How to increase the pool of regional experts in response to the regional needs

5.1 Gap analysis

Pooling and utilizing regional experts is an ongoing process. The current availability of regional experts may have a gap with the actual regional needs. In this regard, ROCB will continuously analyze the gap between these two and to identify what specific expertise should be improved, supplemented in the region. This information shall also be shared with the WCO to steer their decision on further accreditation processes. For example, to implement non-intrusive inspection technology, most of members are lack of such expertise. Also, if the WCO develops accreditation concepts for new areas of expertise, the ROCB takes a pro-active role to share this information in the region and to enable participation of regional experts.

5.2 Use of CB needs survey

To conduct needs assessment and gap analysis, the current regional CB Needs survey shall be considered as a good channel. Specific questions can be added to enquire the existing expertise and future needs in terms of regional expertise.

5.3 Accreditation workshop

If ROCB identify the gap between the needs and existing expertise, ROCB will, in cooperation with regional members, try to identify available experts and, where appropriate, prepare project proposal to the WCO for their development of accreditation concepts workshop on that topic. The “candidate list” mentioned in the paragraph 2.2(2) will be the good reference materials in this regard. Also, if the WCO decides on an accreditation mechanism in areas, where regional expertise has already been identified, the ROCB will ensure that these experts get timely notion of these accreditation opportunities at WCO level.

(end)