

2. OVERVIEW OF COURSE PLANNING & PREPARATION

The EA-ESDM course is a field-based training delivered with a geographically dispersed training team. As such, logistical and preparation requirements are significant. *If these requirements are not addressed with care, and the timelines are not honored, training success can be seriously compromised.*

This chapter provides an overview of course planning and preparation. The subsequent two chapters provide detail on the most critical tasks in this process.

This chapter assumes a “standard course,” delivered with a cost-share from ENCAP, which also provides the preplanning lead and principal trainer. However, the planning and preparation activities described here are generally applicable to all courses.

The table below organizes the planning and preparation tasks discussed in this and subsequent chapters into timeline format.

TABLE 5: TIMELINE FOR COURSE PLANNING & DELIVERY

| TIMING | ACTION | CRITICAL ELEMENTS |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| 4+ months before course | Reach understanding on the basics | Set preliminary dates Create tentative plan for course funding Arrange preplanning visit |
| 3-4 months before course | Preplanning visit | Identify audience/participants & particular needs the course must meet Raise awareness of the course among target participants & confirm dates Identify venue Identify field visit sites; gather information for field visit briefings; develop field visit itinerary Set tentative course dates Identify logistics coordinator (if not already determined) Identify host country/regional experts Develop draft budget & SOWs; agree on division of responsibilities between parties (including responsibility/arrangements for reproduction of materials) Agree on contract mechanism (if not already agreed) Identify & resolve protocol issues Identify next steps and responsibilities |
| 3 months before course (continues until course delivery) | Finalize logistics | Organize participant logistics Finalize contracts Organize principal trainer (and any assistant trainer) travel and logistics Reconfirm venue |

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| | | Arrange transportation for case site visits Procure equipment, supplies, and services Invite guest speakers and dignitaries Finalize customizations to course materials and agenda |
| 2 months before course | Letter of invitation | Send official letter of invitation to course participants |
| 1 month before course | Finalize materials | Receive briefing papers from local experts Assemble complete sourcebook Reproduce and ship materials to destination country |
| 1 week before course | Final preparations | All trainers arrive in country Reconfirm venue Reconfirm case sites and logistics Review sourcebooks for quality control |
| 2 days before course | Trainers and logisticians arrive at venue | Reconfirm meeting space Reconfirm equipment, materials, and services Trainer meetings and final course preparations |
| 1 days before course | Participants arrive at venue | Welcome participants Trainer meetings and final course preparations |
| Course delivery (1 week) | All participants, trainers, and logisticians at venue | Course sessions Trainer meetings Resolve last minute logistical issues |

2.1. FIRST STEP: REACH UNDERSTANDING ON FUNDING/COST-SHARES & PREPLANNING SUPPORT

The first step in the course planning process is an agreement-in-principal between the mission and ENCAP regarding (1) the intent to deliver a course and approximate dates/timing; (2) a basic cost-share between the mission and ENCAP; and (3) preplanning support (see below).

Ideally, there will be agreement regarding the contract mechanism to be used as well.

The USAID BEO or REA generally conducts initial discussions with the mission, and hands off communications to the ENCAP team leader once basic agreement has been reached.

2.2. PREPLANNING VISIT

This section assumes that the *preplanning lead* (see staffing table, Chapter 1) is based out-of-country. When this is the case, a preplanning visit is almost always required.

TIMING & DURATION

The preplanning visit should be conducted at least three months before the course. The visit will require a minimum of seven working days in-country. Long travel times to venues and case sites will add to the required time.

PREPLANNING SUPPORT BY HOST MISSION OR LOCAL PARTNER

Preplanning is a joint effort of the preplanning lead (provided by the ENCAP team) and the preplanning counterpart, who should be a staff person with the host mission or a lead local partner.

The host mission/local partner should provide transport for the field site and venue survey. The preplanning counterpart should conduct the field site survey with the preplanning lead, and otherwise facilitate the objectives and entailed tasks described below.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the preplanning visit is to define the key parameters for the course and put in place a “game plan” (schedule and assignment of responsibilities) that will result in successful course delivery.

Specific preplanning tasks are set out in the table below. See Chapter 3 for detail and instructions regarding the most critical/complicated of these tasks.

TABLE 6: EA-ESDM COURSE PREPLANNING VISIT OBJECTIVES

| OBJECTIVE | ENTAILED TASKS & NOTES |
|---|--|
| Identify audience/participants & particular needs the course must meet | Discuss course objectives with the mission and meet with target participants (contractors, host country institutions, PVOs, NGOs, etc.) to identify needed special topics, changes to the generic course agenda, and other adaptations necessary to meet participant/mission needs. Assess proposed course dates with key participants. |
| Raise awareness of the course among target participants & confirm dates | |
| Identify venue | Work with mission and/or partners to develop a list of prospective field trip sites & venues. Emphasize selection of sites where field teams will be able to conduct to interviews with affected stakeholders. Visit prospective field trip sites and venues to evaluate appropriateness and availability. (Case sites should reflect the anticipated |
| Identify field visit sites; gather information for field visit briefings; develop field visit itinerary | |

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| | <p>interests/needs of the participants).</p> <p>Gather information to develop case site briefings.</p> <p>The number of case sites to be identified depends on the number of participations. Field trip groups should be no more than 12, and each should visit 2-3 different sites during the day.</p> |
| Set tentative course dates | Will depend on venue, partner & mission availability. |
| Identify logistics coordinator (if not already determined) | If the logistics coordinator is not already determined, identify and interview candidates, obtain CVs, and fee histories. Brief candidates on course requirements. |
| Identify host country/regional experts | Identify candidates and, if at all possible, interview them. Obtain CVs, and fee histories. |
| Develop draft budget & SOWs; agree on division of responsibilities between parties | <p>Discuss overall planning requirements with the USAID mission and/or lead partner.</p> <p>Note that venue costs and number of participants are key cost drivers.</p> <p>Agree on materials reproduction strategy.</p> |
| Agree on contract mechanism (if not already agreed) | <p>Make sure that</p> <p>TABLE 4: EA-ESDM is provided to key parties in the mission.</p> |
| Identify & resolve protocol issues | <p>Discuss with USAID mission/lead partner the protocol for opening/closing the course and involvement of the host government. (e.g., will a government official be invited for this purpose?)</p> <p>Identify who will sign course certificates.</p> |
| Identify next steps and responsibilities | A debriefing meeting should be held with all key parties, preferably together, to identify next steps and who has the responsibility for each. |

PREPLANNING LEAD AS PRINCIPAL TRAINER

Whenever possible, the preplanning lead should also serve as the principal trainer for the course. This reduces the chances of problems arising in the transition from preplanning and the run-up to course delivery.

2.3. THE PREPLANNING REPORT

The preplanning report is the critical output of the preplanning process. The preplanning report:

- Documents the critical parameters of the course (e.g., dates, venue, case sites, draft budget, cost shares, roles and responsibilities of the various parties, contract mechanism);
- Often contains SOWs developed for the various positions (see Annex A for template SOWs);
- Always contains immediate next steps (and who is responsible); and
- Must clearly describe any issues requiring resolution (and who will resolve them).

The preplanning lead should complete the preplanning report as soon as possible (and not more than 1 week) after the completion of the preplanning visit.

A preplanning report template is included in Appendix C. Also included in this Appendix are the Course Planning Checklists and the Procurement List. Refer to www.encapafrika.org for a sample of a preplanning report.

2.4. FOLLOWING THRU ON THE PREPLANNING VISIT/REPORT

The preplanning report (along with the checklist in Appendix C) is the action plan for the team that will work to deliver the course. To implement it successfully, frequent communication between the principal trainer, the logistics coordinator and the ENCAP home office is essential.

To best assure that this action plan is implemented in full, the preplanning lead should also be the principal trainer. However, this is not always possible. In this case, the preplanning lead must brief the principal trainer personally, and in detail regarding the preplanning exercise.

Key implementation and follow-thru tasks are listed in the table below. **Chapter 4 contains guidance on each task.**

TABLE 7: KEY IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-THRU TASKS

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| CONTRACTS | Problems with contracting are the number one source of delays and difficulties! |
| ISSUING INVITATIONS, TRACKING RSVPS | Invitations with RSVP requests should be issued 2 months in advance of the course dates. <i>(Appendix D contains two sample templates for course invitations)</i> |
| DETAILED DESIGN OF COURSE PROGRAM | The course program must reflect special topics, venue requirements, speaker availability, etc. |
| MATERIALS ASSEMBLY AND REPRODUCTION | Quality materials are essential to a high-quality course. Materials reproduction and assembly requires significant effort , coordination between the principal trainer, the ENCAP home office and the logistics coordinator. |
| EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, SERVICES PROCUREMENT | Without the right equipment in place and the right services (e.g., case site transport) in place, the training cannot succeed. <i>See procurement list in Appendix C.</i> |
| VENUE AND CASE SITE LIASON | Official letters must be sent to case site contacts and other protocol observed. Payments must be made and RSVPs communicated to the venue. |

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| SECURING OPENING/CLOSING SPEAKERS | High-profile speakers help set the tone of the course. They must be secured well in advance. |
| COURSE CERTIFICATES | Course certificate designs must be approved and blank certificates signed prior to the course. <i>(Appendix E contains a template for a course-certificate)</i> |

2.5. DELIVERY: EARLY ARRIVAL BY THE PRINCIPAL TRAINER AND OTHER NOTES

Early arrival by the principal trainer at least 3 (and preferably 4) working days in advance of the course is almost always required for successful course delivery. Experience teaches that:

- If sourcebook reproduction is done in-country, **the principal trainer must carefully review the sourcebooks** and assure that any errors are corrected and last minute additions are included. *Make sure there is enough time for the copy shop to make necessary corrections!*
- **Case sites should be revisited in person and all arrangements confirmed. Transport arrangements should be re-confirmed.**
- **Early arrival at the venue** is necessary to confirm that all meeting room arrangements are in place
- **The training team should meet in advance** to confirm roles and responsibilities, a common approach to facilitating the work groups, etc. In some cases, trainers may need to practice presentations using each other as an audience, particularly when new material is involved.
- **Have extra cash on hand** for unexpected procurement needs, delayed bank transfers, and other problems.