

# APQC's Process Classification Framework (PCF)<sup>®</sup>

## BUSINESS RULES

This document attempts to identify and standardize the guidelines for updating and maintaining the PCF.

The PCF is a taxonomy or organized list of business processes. It has been developed and refined by individuals from organizations around the world and continues to be the focal point of benchmarking activities for APQC nearly 20 years after its inception.

The PCF reflects a functional view of an organization, rather than a cross-functional view. It serves many purposes for organizations including: facilitating benchmarking, aiding in process definition and governance, and forming the structure of a content management or knowledge management taxonomy for the organization.

The framework is intended to be valuable to organizations in any industry. There are also industry specific “offspring” of the PCF. Industry-specific frameworks generally address functions or processes that are materially different or absent from the cross-industry framework.

## RULES

### 1. VERB-NOUN FORMAT

All items in the PCF begin with a verb describing the process, activity, etc. Verbs commonly used in the PCF are: define, develop, design, build, plan, create, support, manage, test, perform, conduct, process, and implement.

### 2. DESCRIPTIVE, NOT PRESCRIPTIVE WORDING

For example: “Develop Vision & Strategy,” not “Strategy & Vision Development.”

### 3. HIERARCHICAL FUNCTIONAL DECOMPOSITION

The PCF begins by identifying the major functional categories of an organization. Following the MECE principle (see the section on MECE below for more information), these categories should collectively describe all of the work done at an organization and should not overlap each other.

Each of these functions is then individually decomposed into further levels of detail

through a functional decomposition process that typically begins with asking a simple question: “what happens here?”

Categories are parent to process groups, process groups are parent to processes, processes are parent to activities, and activities are parent to tasks.

The PCF is intended to identify the complete collection of what happens at each part of the organization, not the order in which these things happen or the dependency between these elements. Exception flows should also be included.

#### **4. MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE AND COLLECTIVELY EXHAUSTIVE (MECE)**

Each level of the PCF encompasses all nested levels below it. The nested levels, when performed, help achieve the intended outcome of the parent level, making it possible to create a holistic view of the category or process group.

The order of process elements within a hierarchy does not imply execution order; merely the scope of the parent process element.

All process elements in the PCF are mutually exclusive except in certain rare circumstances where overlap is necessary due to the higher-level decomposition. This issue typically arises when the higher level functional decomposition is not truly a functional decomposition, but rather organized around a channel or variance in the way things are done. We try to minimize these instances. In cases where the subordinate parts represent the same scope, we'll assign the same unique identifier to the process element.

#### **5. DEFINITIONS AND GLOSSARY**

The PCF is intended to be self-defining through the hierarchical functional decomposition. Each parent element is defined by its child elements.

In cases where additional detail is desired, APQC publishes definition documents that elaborate on the process elements and include key performance indicators.

#### **6. NUMBERING**

The PCF has three main numbering schemes: the version numbering scheme, the hierarchical numbering scheme, and the process element numbering scheme.

The version numbering scheme represents a specific collection of process elements configured in such a way as to represent the cross-industry framework or an industry-specific framework. Each release of the PCF corresponds to a specific version of the framework. Releases of the PCF also have a publication date associated with them. This date helps identify releases made to address typographical errors in publishing. Version numbering follows the “major, minor, release” numbering scheme. The version number associated with a publication of the PCF will only change if the PCF content changes; version number changes are not made if a new publication is made to correct publishing defects. APQC determines when to increment the version number. Major releases typically occur when category-level changes are made. Minor releases typically occur

when process-level changes are made. Release number changes only happen in case of minor typographical changes to the content in the PCF with no substantive content changes. The version numbering scheme also includes the industry designation code and the language code.

The hierarchical numbering scheme is intended to serve as a simple index for human consumption. The numbers are specific to a particular release and are not comparable across version numbers of the PCF. Numbers are hierarchically oriented and allow for easy location of a specific element. These numbers will change across releases.

Unique numbering (five-digit process element identification number) is assigned by APQC once process elements are formally accepted into the PCF. This unique 5-digit number is a machine readable index number that is used to maintain control of the definition of the element within APQC's process element database. For end-users customizing the PCF for their own internal purposes, APQC provides 5,000 process element numbers in the range of 95000-99999. Process elements numbered 95000-99999 are not a part of the core APQC process element database.

## 7. MEMBER REVIEW PERIOD

All PCF releases must pass an APQC member review period to last no less than two weeks and no more than 60 days.

The purpose of the member review period is to provide APQC members an opportunity to review the release and provide feedback prior to a general release.



## SUBMITTING CONTENT TO APQC

APQC regularly accepts content from organizations around the world for inclusion in the PCF. If you have a suggestion for content to include in a PCF, please send an email to [pcf\\_feedback@apqc.org](mailto:pcf_feedback@apqc.org)

## ABOUT APQC

APQC helps organizations work smarter, faster, and with greater confidence. It is the world's foremost authority in benchmarking, best practices, process and performance improvement, and knowledge management. APQC's unique structure as a member-based nonprofit makes it a differentiator in the marketplace. APQC partners with more than 500 member organizations worldwide in all industries. With more than 40 years of experience, APQC remains the world's leader in transforming organizations. Visit us at [www.apqc.org](http://www.apqc.org), and learn how you can make best practices your practices.

