

National Trade Facilitation Committees: Roadmaps

GUIDANCE AND GOOD PRACTICE

NTFC Roadmaps and Translating Commitment into Effective Action

How do NTFCs ensure that higher-level commitment translates into effective decision making? How does a committee remain effective in light of unexpected changes (i.e. natural emergencies)? How to ensure sustainability of the NTFC?



Introduction

What is a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap?

A National Trade Facilitation Roadmap is a short but comprehensive document that outlines a strategic vision for implementing trade facilitation reforms in a given country and within a given period (usually three to five years).

The roadmap includes a set of activities to be undertaken to reach pre-defined goals that are measured with performance indicators. It includes:

- Specific steps, projects and activities
- An assessment of the difficulties, costs, and benefits to enable the committee to establish priorities
- Short and long-term objectives that will enable the committee to achieve tangible results.

Benefits of a roadmap

- It is not limited to the provisions of the [WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement](#) (TFA)
- Reinforces the political commitment required for trade facilitation by all relevant border agencies and ministries
- Establishes a governance structure for the overall management of trade facilitation reforms
- Uses performance indicators as a driving force for reform, since monitoring and evaluation are the core elements of a roadmap.

What is a National Trade Facilitation Committee?

The World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) entered into force on 22 February 2017. Article 23.2 requires WTO members to establish a National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) or to designate an existing mechanism that can facilitate the domestic coordination and implementation of the TFA's provisions.



Context

Drafting a roadmap: good practices¹

- *Be inclusive:* A national trade facilitation reform program involves a wide-range of actors. The process of drafting a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap should therefore be inclusive. Stakeholders will be more supportive of implementing a roadmap that they helped conceive.
- *Be consistent:* Before drafting a roadmap, an analysis should be undertaken of the current actions, projects and initiatives in areas relevant to trade facilitation, such as trade, investment and transport. This will ensure that the roadmap builds on any existing initiatives.
- *Be comprehensive:* Trade facilitation involves a wide-range of initiatives, which include policies, business processes and approaches. The roadmap should take a wholistic approach and consider all aspects of trade facilitation.
- *Be concise and clear:* The roadmap should be accessible and easily understood by policy makers and managers from knowledge areas other than trade facilitation. It should be concise and, ideally, no longer than 30-50 pages. It should emphasize the benefits of trade facilitation reforms and highlight the impact of the reforms on economic growth. This will help when garnering the necessary political and administrative support for the roadmap.

¹ UNECE, 2015. Guide to Drafting a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap

- *Leave details for later:* The roadmap defines the main activities required to achieve strategic goals and how to measure performance. It will not define in detail how each activity will be implemented. This latter is left to project plans that are developed when the roadmap is in its implementation stage.
- *Use existing tools:* International organizations provide a wide range of tools that are useful when drafting a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap.

Roadmap elements

Vision statement

The objective of the vision statement is two-fold:

1. It provides guidance and direction for the reform process
2. It serves as inspiration and a source of motivation

The vision statement needs to be clear and concise, focusing on the ‘what’ and ‘when’, and not ‘how’. It should describe benefits in a quantifiable form and provide clear timelines for deriving various benefits.

Baseline

The objective is to assess the current trade facilitation situation in the country and its deficiencies with regard to a desired to-be situation. The to-be situation is often designed by international best practice such as the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, the WCO Kyoto Convention or best practices from other countries. It often includes desk research, a gap analysis, consultations and interviews, and a business process analysis.

Goals

The goals design the future outcomes that need to be achieved. Each goal contributes to the achievement of the vision statement.

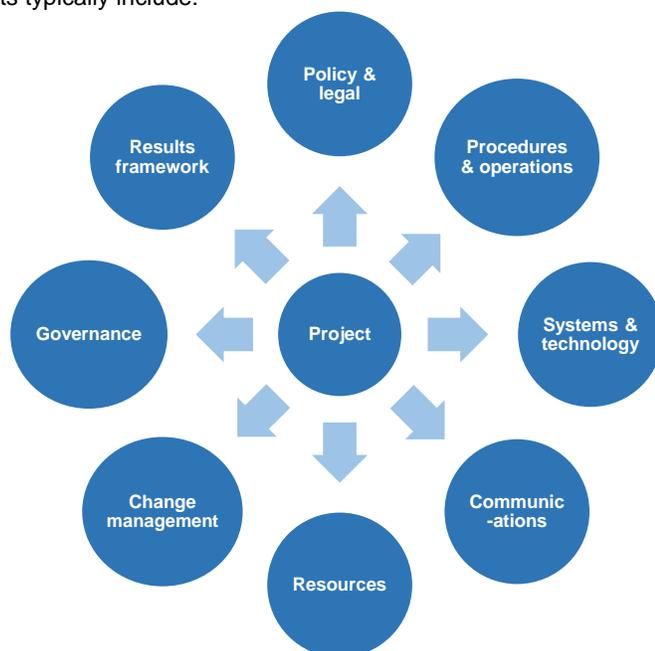
Activities

An activity is a specific initiative or project that will implement a trade facilitation instrument or solution.

- *Timelines:* Discuss changes in timeline for some activities specified in the initial TFA report and subsequent NTFC discussions.
- *Initial actions for working groups:* Each working group should begin with a position paper. The position papers are then considered by the NTFC and outline the next steps for implementation.
- *Position papers set out:* A starting position (current legislation, resources, practices, etc.) and the reforms required (potential timeframes, resources, etc).

Project design and initiatives

Project design elements typically include:



It is important to note that different projects may be carried out in parallel or staggered depending on their complexity and the number of agencies involved.

Monitoring

Measuring the performance of trade facilitation reforms is important. Indicators are designed to track reform implementation and typically show a reduction in customs physical inspections, elimination of unnecessary documents, automation of manual processing steps, and consequent reduction of clearance times. Performance indicators should be built into the roadmap to track reform implementation.

Implementation schedule

The roadmap establishes a framework for the activities to be implemented over a period of three to five years. This implementation schedule helps monitor the state of implementation of the roadmap.

Start-up phase (0-1 years)

- Governance structure established
- Preparation for delivery of actions (project plans, teams, etc.)
- Quick win action plans implemented

Delivery phase (1-4 years)

- Actions implemented
- Completion of actions is reviewed using performance indicators
- Midway through the delivery phase, KPIs should be monitored to ensure that the country is on the right track to achieve its identifiable goals

Closing phase (0-1 years)

- Evaluation of the achievement of goals using performance indicators
- Drafting a new roadmap for the next three to five years and ensure approval



Country Examples

India: “Faceless, contactless, and paperless”

In India, the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap for 2020-23 focuses on digitalization and has three key pillars: faceless, contactless, and paperless. The key outcomes focus on faster clearance of goods; anonymous customs assessments; reduced interface with customs officers; and uniform India customs assessments. The roadmap is supported by an action plan, which highlights 66 trade facilitation measures for fostering trade and development. Each activity is identified with concerned agencies responsible for its execution in different timelines: short term (0-6 months), medium term (6-18 months), and long term (18-36 months). The action plan includes the following action points: 14 TFA Category B and 52 TFA Plus actions points, and covers three aspects: regulatory, technology, and infrastructure.

Nigeria: “Determine, develop, and drive”

In Nigeria, the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap for 2018-22 is themed ‘determine, develop, and drive’ and aims to improve the country’s trade competitiveness. It has an ambitious goal to be among the top 10 performers in Africa in ensuring the effective movement of goods within the region, thereby contributing to the growth of SMEs, increasing employment and foreign direct investment for Nigeria’s prosperity. The NTFC’s mandate goes beyond the WTO TFA. With the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in January 2021, the NTFC’s role was expanded to serve as a national trade monitoring body. As a result, the roadmap will be reviewed to 2021-25 with a single vision supported by specific goals and activities and presented at the high-level (Ministry Principals) for adoption.

Costa Rica: Three-pronged approach to trade facilitation

In Costa Rica, the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap promotes initiatives on trade facilitation in three different areas: (1) the WTO TFA; (2) the creation of trade commissions to modernize border posts; and (3) the Central American strategy for trade facilitation and competitiveness. Even though the NTFC was created in the context of the WTO TFA, it addresses issues and aims at reaching results beyond the implementation of the WTO TFA. By defining a broad scope of action from the beginning, the NTFC has been more flexible to adapt to changes in new international and regional agreements and priorities. This is essential for the sustainability of the NTFC.