

APQC's Process Classification Framework® (PCF) Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions that we receive regarding APQC's Process Classification Framework (PCF)®. Additional FAQs can be found in [The Process Classification Framework: Frequently Asked Questions \(/resource-library/resource-listing/process-classification-framework-frequently-asked-questions\)](/resource-library/resource-listing/process-classification-framework-frequently-asked-questions).

If you are not able to answer your question, feel free to [contact us \(/contact-us\)](/contact-us).

PCF Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE PROCESS CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORK® (PCF)?

APQC's Process Classification Framework® (PCF) (</process-performance-management/process-frameworks>) is a taxonomy of business processes that allows organizations to objectively track and compare their performance internally and externally with organizations from any industry. It is the most used process framework in the world. It creates a common language for organizations to communicate and define work processes comprehensively and without redundancies. Organizations are using it to support benchmarking, manage content, and perform other important performance management activities.

Additional Resources

- [How APQC's Process Classification Framework® Can Help Deliver Better Process Management \(/resource-library/resource/how-apqcs-process-classification-frameworkr-can-help-deliver-better\)](/resource-library/resource/how-apqcs-process-classification-frameworkr-can-help-deliver-better)

View the video below and visit our [process frameworks webpage \(/process-performance-management/process-frameworks\)](/process-performance-management/process-frameworks) to learn more.

WHERE DO I GET A COPY OF THE PCF?

APQC has a few versions of the Process Classification Framework® (PCF) . There is a cross-industry version, but we also have industry-specific versions to better suit your organization. All versions are housed in our Resource Library.

Learn about the [cross-industry version \(/pcf-excel\)](/pcf-excel).

Learn about industry-specific versions (</process-performance-management/process-frameworks/industry-specific-process-frameworks>).

WHAT IS THE LATEST VERSION OF THE PCF?

The latest version of the PCF is version 7.4. It can be found in our Resource Library in [PDF \(/pcf-pdf\)](/pcf-pdf) and [Excel \(/pcf-excel\)](/pcf-excel) format.

Just because a new version has been released does not mean the current version of the PCF you are using will no longer be supported. APQC supports all versions of the PCF, as long as it works for you and your organization.

IS THE PCF AVAILABLE IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH?

Yes, APQC's cross-industry PCF is available in languages including Spanish, French, Russian, and Mandarin. Some industry-specific versions of the PCF like APQC's

Banking PCF are also available in other languages. See APQC's Process Classification Framework (PCF)—Cross-industry and Industry-Specific Versions collection (</resource-library/resource-collection/apqcs-process-classification-framework-pcf-cross-industry-and/>) for available versions and languages.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PCF AND A CAPABILITY MODEL?

APQC defines a process as a series of interrelated activities that convert inputs into results (outputs). Processes consume resources, require standards for repeatable performance, and respond to control systems that direct the quality, rate, and cost of performance. APQC defines capability as the ability of an entity (e.g., organization, department, or individual) to achieve its objectives. Capability implies maturity and effectiveness because it involves combining these additional factors in the execution of the process to deliver the work.

Organizations will sometimes use process and capability interchangeably. Organizations need to be careful doing this as the terms don't mean the same thing. The difference between a process and capability can be difficult for some process professionals to understand. Processes can be independent of a capability and capabilities can exist without a process.

Additional Resources:

- [Process vs. Capability: Understanding the Difference \(/resource-library/resource-listing/process-vs-capability-understanding-difference\)](/resource-library/resource-listing/process-vs-capability-understanding-difference)
- [Business Capabilities and How They Relate to Processes \(/resource-library/resource-listing/business-capabilities-and-how-they-relate-processes\)](/resource-library/resource-listing/business-capabilities-and-how-they-relate-processes)

HOW DO YOU GET BUY-IN FOR USING THE PCF?

The PCF lends itself very well to being understood and adopted across an organization. In some organizations, the PCF can be used to build a process foundation within an organization. APQC's Resource Library has a wide range of case studies detailing the ways in which organizations have adopted and built awareness around the PCF, making it a great resource for organizations who are just getting started.

Additional Resources:

- [How to Use Process Frameworks \(Case Studies\) \(/resource-library/resource-collection/how-use-process-frameworks-case-studies\)](/resource-library/resource-collection/how-use-process-frameworks-case-studies)
- [Applying APQC's Process Classification Framework For Business Value \(/resource-library/resource-listing/applying-apqcs-process-classification-framework-pcf-business\)](/resource-library/resource-listing/applying-apqcs-process-classification-framework-pcf-business)
- [Building the Business Case for Process Management Collection \(/resource-library/resource-collection/building-business-case-process-management\)](/resource-library/resource-collection/building-business-case-process-management)

HOW DOES THE PCF LINK TO APQC'S BENCHMARKS?

Elements in APQC's Process Classification Framework (PCF) include both a hierarchy ID and a PCF element ID. The hierarchy represents where the element sits in correlation to all the other elements in the PCF. The PCF element ID is a unique five-digit reference number, which allows for benchmarking even when process element names and definitions change across industries and organizations. It is especially helpful for organizations that want to use the PCF as a baseline for creating their own custom process framework. They can rename processes according to organizational norms but keep the reference numbers to easily “translate” processes back to the PCF for benchmarking.

Once you are in APQC's [Benchmarks on Demand \(/benchmarking-portal/bod#/\)](/benchmarking-portal/bod#/) portal, you can use the element ID to search for metrics related to the element.

Additional Resources:

- [Applying a Process Framework: Benchmarking \(/resource-library/resource-listing/applying-process-framework-benchmarking\)](/resource-library/resource-listing/applying-process-framework-benchmarking)

DOES APQC HAVE A TOOL FOR ORGANIZATIONS TO USE TO MANAGE AND/OR CUSTOMIZE THE PCF?

We find Excel is the most flexible and usable format for adapting and customizing the PCF to meet an organization's needs, and the format needed to import the framework elements into the process management tools already used by the organization. We are always looking for ways to make customizing the PCF a better experience; keep an eye out for updates and send us an email at membership@apqc.org (<mailto:membership@apqc.org>) if you have any suggestions.

Additional Resources:

- [How to Successfully Adapt a Process Framework \(/resource-library/resource-listing/how-successfully-adapt-process-framework\)](/resource-library/resource-listing/how-successfully-adapt-process-framework)

WHY SHOULD I USE THE PCF VERSUS OTHER FRAMEWORKS?

Process frameworks help organizations to clarify their processes, better understand the connectivity of processes at a high level, search for process improvement opportunities, and more. But not all frameworks are created equal. After describing some of the most common frameworks and their uses, this [article \(/resource-library/resource-listing/three-reasons-choosing-apqcs-process-classification-framework-pcf\)](/resource-library/resource-listing/three-reasons-choosing-apqcs-process-classification-framework-pcf) highlights popular applications of APQC's Process Classification Framework (PCF) and provides three key reasons why organizations should use the PCF as their framework of choice.

HOW DO YOU GET STARTED WITH THE PCF?

The PCF is a catalog, or index, of an organization's process activities; it is an index of what an organization does. It is important to note it is not how an organization

manages and executes its processes. The PCF is organized to rationally capture, group, and decompose process activities so that an organization has an inventory of process activities from a high-level process category to a process activity.

Organizations typically adopt and adapt the PCF to “fit,” or align best with their organization’s processes. APQC designed the PCF in a way that any organization can adopt it and find most of its process activities in it.

Your organization should first evaluate your goal for applying a process framework, then determine which framework to use.

Additional Resources:

- [Leveraging APQC's Process Classification Framework \(PCF\) for More Effective Processes \(/resource-library/resource-listing/leveraging-apqcs-process-classification-framework-pcf-more\)](#)
- [Three Reasons for Choosing APQC's Process Classification Framework \(PCF\) \(/resource-library/resource-listing/three-reasons-choosing-apqcs-process-classification-framework-pcf\)](#)

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON APPLICATIONS FOR THE PCF?

Process frameworks like APQC’s Process Classification Framework® (PCF) are incredibly useful for jumpstarting process standardization, developing a common language for processes, creating end-to-end process maps, and more.

Additional Resources:

- [How to Apply Process Frameworks \(/resource-library/resource-collection/how-apply-process-frameworks\)](#)
- [Best Practices in Process Frameworks 2023 \(/resource-library/resource-collection/best-practices-process-frameworks-2023\)](#)

HOW DO ORGANIZATIONS CREATE AWARENESS AROUND THE PCF?

The PCF lends itself very well to being understood and adopted across an organization. In some organizations, the PCF can be used to build a process foundation within an organization. For example, APQC’s case study of [Pratt & Whitney \(/resource-library/resource-listing/combining-frameworks-and-governance-organizational-alignment\)](#) describes how the PCF was used to develop a process framework to structure a centralized process repository that establishes visible ownership and cross-functional alignment of processes, roles, and tools.

The spread of the PCF across the organization is largely a result of the work and awareness that began in that department. Other organizations like the [University of North Texas \(/knowledge-base/documents/taxonomy-process-improvements-university-north-texas-system-administration-\)](#) have taken a more centralized approach to building awareness around the PCF through messaging campaigns, intranet resources, and strong change management methods to promote the use of the PCF. Once they adopt the PCF, organizations often make the PCF a central part of their process training, explaining what the PCF is and how the organization is going to use it.

APQC’s Resource Library has a wide range of case studies detailing the ways in which

organizations have adopted and built awareness around the PCF, making it a great resource for organizations who are just getting started.

CAN APQC'S PCF BE COMBINED WITH OTHER FRAMEWORKS?

When trying to merge the PCF with another framework, APQC recommends creating a mapping file. For example, put the entire procedure in question on the left side and the PCF process it maps to on the right.

There are three things to watch for:

1. If the procedure and the PCF process are an exact match, you can simply label the unique PCF ID.
2. If the procedure addresses more than one PCF element, you will label the procedure with a list of comma-separated PCF IDs instead.
3. Lastly, if multiple procedures or elements align with one PCF element, you can assign the corresponding PCF element to each one instead.

Using the PCF IDs as meta-tags in this way makes it easy for organizations to organize and prioritize activities like technology improvement projects.

Additional Resources

- [How to Successfully Adapt a Process Framework \(/resource-library/resource-listing/how-successfully-adapt-process-framework\)](/resource-library/resource-listing/how-successfully-adapt-process-framework)

CAN I ADD OR REMOVE MY OWN ORGANIZATION'S PROCESSES TO THE PCF?

Organizations may initially feel they need to customize the PCF to better fit their organization, but after further investigation, find it is not necessary. APQC suggests organizations ask themselves the following questions before deciding to add or remove elements:

1. Will I need to benchmark the element?
2. Do we just call the element something slightly different than it is called in the PCF?
3. Do I understand what the PCF is designed to do and what it is not designed to do?
4. Do I know how to define this element?
5. Why do I need to add/remove the element?

The key to customizing a process framework is developing criteria for adapting processes and avoiding the common pitfalls APQC has found in adapting the PCF.

Additional Resources

- [How to Successfully Adapt a Process Framework \(/resource-library/resource-listing/how-successfully-adapt-process-framework\)](/resource-library/resource-listing/how-successfully-adapt-process-framework)

SHOULD I ADAPT THE PCF TO TRY TO MIRROR MY ORGANIZATION'S STRUCTURE?

APQC's PCF is designed to provide a list of work that is done in the organization; not how the work is performed. Therefore, one function (or process) may perform steps with elements from multiple categories in the PCF. Organizations should not adapt the PCF to mirror their organization's structure, but instead should use the PCF as a "pick list" of work that could be done in their organization and align the order in which it happens (displayed in process maps) to their organization's way of working.

Additional Resources

- [How to Select the Best Process Framework for Your Needs \(/resource-library/resource-listing/how-select-best-process-framework-your-needs\)](#)

Related Resources

ARTICLES***Don't Reinvent the Wheel,
Start with the PCF*****JUNE 19, 2025****(/resource-library/resource-
listing/dont-reinvent-wheel-
start-pcf-1)****COLLECTIONS*****How to Apply Process
Frameworks*****JUNE 19, 2025****(/resource-library/resource-
collection/how-apply-
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listing/current-state-
assessments-considerations)****INFOGRAPHICS*****Driving Effectiveness:
Purpose and Value of BPM
Programs*****JUNE 19, 2025****(/resource-library/resource-
collection/driving-effectiveness-
purpose-value-bpm-programs)**

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[FAQS \(HTTPS://WWW.APQC.ORG/FAQ\)](https://www.apqc.org/faq) **[COOKIE PREFERENCES](#)**

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