

Document Purpose

This Practices Guide is a brief document that provides an overview describing the best practices, activities, attributes, and related templates, tools, information, and key terminology of industry-leading project management practices and their accompanying project management templates.

Background

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Enterprise Performance Life Cycle (EPLC) is a framework to enhance Information Technology (IT) governance through rigorous application of sound investment and project management principles, and industry best practices. The EPLC provides the context for the governance process and describes interdependencies between its project management, investment management, and capital planning components. The EPLC framework establishes an environment in which HHS IT investments and projects consistently achieve successful outcomes that align with Department and Operating Division goals and objectives.

Implementation planning is the practice of outlining activities necessary to ensure that the project's product is available for use by its end-users as originally planned. Implementation planning should present a clear alignment between regulations, policies, business and processes, and implementation objectives while clearly outlining any project constraints and/or assumptions. Implementation efforts often impact organizational activities and change existing cultures, structures, policies, processes, procedures, etc. The project team should work with stakeholders to identify, estimate, and plan for such impacts to minimize any resistance to change resulting from the implementation effort. Project stakeholders should anticipate this and develop strategies for dealing with these challenges. Some items to consider when developing such strategies may include:

- Planning for changes to current roles and job responsibilities/functions
- Planning for changes to workforce relocations, increases, reductions, etc
- Planning for changes to employee morale, training, retention, etc
- Planning for changes to business process
- Planning for changes to technology requirements
- Setting clear expectations and encouraging open dialog
- Identifying and communicating changes and the process for managing those changes
- Ensuring that policies, processes, procedures, etc are consistent across the organization

Implementation planning will also include finalizing items such as the selection of hardware, software, and vendors; building testing technology requirements and networks, installing and testing the actual system; performing final system and user acceptance testing; preparing and implementing data conversion/migration plans; training the users; and ultimately converting existing processes and operations over to the new system. Assessing current organizational/business processes related to the implementation. Identifying how existing processes will be impacted and planning for the creation, improvement, or replacement of processes and procedures necessary for implementation success.

Proper implementation planning requires documenting these and other items in the form of an Implementation Plan. Documenting project objectives within an Implementation Plan helps clarify for stakeholders what it is that the project will accomplish as well as its priority in relation to competing endeavors. The Implementation Plan should also communicate the potential impacts resulting from the implementation being affected by the needs of other projects. A well defined Implementation Plan should include approaches for addressing implementation items such as those mentioned within this document. Scheduling time and resources to accomplish this should be done using a realistic implementation schedule that also takes into consideration federal/organizational mandates, policies, and processes as well as Capital Planning and Investment Control, Certification & Accreditation, etc.

Practice Overview

Project implementation is the phase within the project life cycle that integrates the project's product or service into the user's organization. An implementation plan would include all necessary software, hardware, data, documentation, training, and required process/organizational changes. It is important to note that the project team performing the implementation may not always be the same individuals that developed the product. In addition, the resources utilized for the implementation, and the impact upon the organization, may be different than that during the development phase of the product. Depending on the project, one of the following implementation approaches might be used:

Project that includes implementation – Often associated with the implementation of in-house developed products. Product implementation is included as part of the overall project effort, following product development. Implementation planning may begin as early as the planning stage of the product development life cycle or may be contained as **a sub-project, estimated and planned, as part of the overall project effort.**

Project that is only implementation – Often associated with the implementation of COTS/GOTS products. Product implementation makes up the entire project effort. Although, in some cases, a portion of this effort may include customization of the COTS/GOTS solution, the **implementation is planned as a new project beginning with a Project Charter and other necessary project planning and documents** such as a communication management, scope plan, risk/issue management, change control, project scheduling, project management plan, etc.

At the highest level, a project implementation effort consists of three phases:

- Planning
- Implementing
- Transitioning

These are described in more detail below.

Planning - Planning the implementation involves defining strategies and activities to address implementation items such as:

Business Items

- Obtaining executive sponsorship
- Agreeing upon an implementation approach
- Assessing current business processes, identifying and planning for how they may be impacted
- Planning the actual work effort for the implementation
- Developing an implementation schedule
- Creating the required supporting project management, and other, documentation
- Planning the process for managing those changes
- Identifying and communicating changes
- Planning for any organizational change and creating a plan for addressing that change
- Formalizing new job functions and planning for any necessary training
- Developing plans to prepare for any additional organizational impacts
- Accounting for potential impacts on business operations and planning how to best address them so the impact upon the customer and user community is minimized
- Developing an implementation management plan and all of its sub-components such as communication planning, risk identification, change management, organizational training plan, etc
- Identifying risks and devising mitigation strategies and contingency plans

Technical Items

- Assessing current technology, identifying and planning for how it may be impacted
- Building out and preparing the user's production environment
- Identifying any required product customizations
- Transferring technical knowledge and train the user's support staff
- Educating the customer's technical and training staff, and their user community
- Developing a transition plan, in conjunction with project and customer stakeholders, to migrate control and support of the system to the customer

Implementing - Implementing the project's product is the act of actually making the project's product available for use by the customer and its user community by addressing items such as:

Business Items

- Redefining organizational business operations, processes, policies, and procedures
- Identifying organizational staffing requirements
- Documenting organizational structures and job functions
- Organizing and executing awareness and training programs

Technical Items

- Modifying organizational technology infrastructure
- Installing any new hardware and software required to operate the new system
- Adjusting network capacity
- Installing, configuring, and testing the pilot system
- Installing, configuring, and testing the full system
- Converting pilot data from the old system to the new system
- Converting all data from the old system to the new system
- Verifying and validating that the system is performing as expected
- Transitioning user's to new operations
- Making the new system available to the users

Transitioning - This final stage of implementation involves officially transitioning the ownership and responsibility of the project's product to the customer. It's worth noting that often the team ultimately responsible for supporting the new system's operations may be different from that which was responsible for the actual implementation of the system. This transition phase includes items such as:

Business Items

- Preparing a transition plan
- Training technical support staff
- Transitioning technical documentation
- Transitioning ownership of the system
- Transitioning the ongoing support and maintenance responsibilities from the implementation team to the customer

Practice Best Practices

- **Customer Requirements** - Confirm customer requirements for scope and their priority.
- **Review and Approve** - Defined management plans should be reviewed and approved by the project manager and any other required stakeholders.
- **Read It** - Make sure that the Implementation Plan is read. Share it with those impacted by, or contributing to, the implementation project.
- **Make Updates** - As the project environment changes updates in the form of appended change requests should reflect any changes to the Implementation Plan and/or its subsidiary plans

Practice Activities

- **Plan** - Define strategies and plan activities to address implementation related items.
- **Implement** - Actually make the project's product available for use by the customer.
- **Transition** - Officially transition the ownership and responsibility of the project's product to the customer.