PRACTICES GUIDE

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

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Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the practice called **Project Completion Report** and to describe the practice overview, requirements, best practices, activities, and key terms related to these requirements. In addition, templates relevant to this practice are provided at the end of this guide.

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.

Practices Overview

The practice of project completion report finalizes all project activities completed across all phases of the project to formally complete the project and transfer the completed or cancelled project as appropriate. The purpose of project completion is to assess the project, ensure completion, and derive any lessons learned and best practices to be applied to future projects. However, in multi-phase projects, the completion practice may be applied at various stages of the project; upon deliverable completion, upon phase completion, upon iteration completion, at designated times during the project's life, or at whatever other juncture represents a completed segment of project work. Applying the completion practice in this manner completes only the portion of the project scope and associated activities applicable to that portion of the project.

The practice of project completion consists of two main activity groups:

Administrative Completion – The administrative completion process defines activities, interactions, and related roles and responsibilities of the project team members and other stakeholders involved in executing the administrative completion procedure for the projects.

Performing the administrative closure process includes integrated activities to collect project records, analyze project success or failure, gather lessons learned, transfer the project products or services to production and/or operations, and archive project information for future use by the organization. Among other activities administrative closure includes:

- Confirming the project has met all sponsor, customer, and stakeholder requirements
- Verifying that all deliverables have been delivered and accepted
- Validating exit criteria have been met

Contract Completion – Contract completion includes activities and interactions needed to settle and complete any contract agreements established for the project, as well as those related to supporting the formal administrative completion of the project.

Contract completion involves verification that all work has been completed correctly and satisfactorily, updating of contract records to reflect final results, and archiving information for future use. Among other activities contract closure includes:

- Confirming the project has addressed the terms and conditions of the contracts
- Confirming completion of exit criteria for contract closure
- Formally closing out all contracts associated with the completed project

Project completion should be anticipated and planned as early as possible in the project lifecycle even though it is often the last major process of a project's life.

At a high-level, the key elements of project completion are:

- Verify acceptance of final project deliverables
- Conduct post-project assessment and lessons learned
- Conduct post-project review and evaluation
- Recognize and celebrate outstanding project work
- Disburse project resources – staff, facilities and automated systems
- Complete and archive final product records
- Ensure transfer of knowledge

Verify Acceptance of Final Project Deliverables

The first step of the completion process is the customer's acceptance of the final deliverables of the project. This is a critical and important step, because it signifies that the customer agrees that the scope of the project and its deliverables are complete and were delivered as agreed upon by all parties. Acceptance is based upon the success criteria defined in the initiating and planning phases of the project. This acceptance should be formal, meaning that physical sign-offs should be obtained by the customer, project sponsor, and the project steering committee, as appropriate.

Document Open Issues

Develop a resolution for each open issue that remains.

Conduct Post-Project Assessment and Lessons Learned

In addition to communicating the closure of a project in writing, it is also advisable to have a mechanism for group review & assessment of the project. Lessons learned should draw on both positive experiences– good ideas that improve project efficiency or save money, and negative experiences– lessons learned only after an undesirable outcome has already occurred. Lessons learned sessions are a valuable closure mechanism for team members, regardless of the project's outcome.

The lessons learned session is typically a meeting that includes:

- Project team
- Stakeholder representation including external project oversight, auditors, and/or QA
- Executive management
- Maintenance and operations staff
- Project support staff

Participants in lessons learned sessions typically discuss questions similar to the following:

- Did the delivered product meet the specified requirements and goals of the project?
- Was the customer satisfied with the end product(s)? If not, why not?
- Where costs budgets met? If not, why not?
- Was the schedule met? If not, why not?
- Were risks identified and mitigated? If not, why not?
- Did the project management methodology work? If not, why not?
- What could be done to improve the process?
- What bottlenecks or hurdles were experienced that impacted the project?
- What procedures should be implemented in future projects?
- What can be done in future projects to facilitate success?
- What changes would assist in speeding up future projects while increasing communication?

Lessons learned and comments regarding project assessment should be documented, presented, and openly discussed with the intent of eliminating the occurrence of avoidable issues on future projects.

Conduct Post-Project Review and Evaluation

A post-project review provides a record of the history of a project. It provides written documentation of the planned and actual budget, the baseline and actual schedule, and documents recommendations for other projects of similar size and scope.

The evaluation should include references or final documentation for the following items:

- Project organization including staffing and skills
- Schedules, WBS
- Successful risk assessment and mitigation techniques, e.g. what risks occurred and what techniques were used to mitigate these risks
- Processes used for configuration management and quality assurance
- General techniques used for project communication
- General techniques for managing customer expectations
- Short-tem success factors and how they were met
- Financial data
- Culture or environment
- Lessons learned
- Recommendations to future project managers

Be certain to identify in the report the project successes, problems on the project, and new ideas that were successful on the project. Make recommendations on how these processes might be adapted for other projects.

Share the project's success with other organizations. In the same way that problem identifications can lead to improvements, successes must be shared so they can be repeated. Where possible, successes should be translated into procedures that will be followed by future projects.

Recognize and Celebrate Outstanding Project Work

Celebrating the success of completing a project with positive reinforcement can be extremely rewarding for project teams. When a project is completed successfully, be certain to provide some kind of recognition to the team. If individuals are singled out for significant achievements, do not forget to recognize the entire team as well.

Management may also want to express recognition of a successful team effort by praising the team at a key meeting or a large gathering of staff. People are proud to have senior management's appreciation openly expressed, and such recognition is a motivation to other projects to be successful.

Complete and Archive Final Project Records

Historic project data is an important source of information to help improve future projects. All records, both electronic and hard copy should be stored according to record retention guidelines. The technical records will be turned over to the personnel responsible for maintenance and operation of the system or program after it has been deployed. The project archive includes a description of the files being stored, the application used to create the archived materials, the location where they are stored, and a point of contact for further information. Typically, at a minimum, the following project data is archived:

- Project Charter
- Project Plan
- Project Management Control Documents
    - Correspondence

    - Meeting notes
    - Relevant meeting notes
    - Status reports
    - Contract files
- Technical Documents
- All Checklists
- Information that had been placed under configuration control
- Lessons Learned
- Post-project Review/evaluation

Ensure Transfer of Knowledge

Once all the project information has been accumulated plan for knowledge transfer where appropriate to those who will be responsible for continued operations. Involve the project participants in the hand-off of responsibility.

Best Practices

The following approaches are recommended best practice to project completion:

- **Involve Stakeholders** - Involve all project participants and stakeholders in the completion process.
- **Use a Checklist** - Review the completion checklist template to make sure all key items have been completed.
- **Solicit Feedback** - Conduct a post-project survey to solicit feedback on the project from the project team, customers, and stakeholders who were well-acquainted with the management of the project.
- **Identify Lessons Learned** - Convene a lessons learned session to promote the success of future projects.
- **Archive Data** - Archive all project data in a central repository. Include best practices, lessons learned, and any other relevant project documentation. Formal data archives should be stored in compliance with US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) regulations.
- **Celebrate** - Celebrate and reward project success.
- **Phased Completion** - The project completion process is generally phased over a period of time, rather than being a single event. Depending on the project type, project completion can begin as deliverables are completed, iterations/phases closed, or at the end of the project. The project manager must ensure that the sponsor and steering committee understand and support the project closing process to reduce final project implementation risks.
- **Manage Resources** - The project manager may face requests to release staff from the project team before all project closing tasks are finished. The project manager should anticipate these requests, considering both project goals and staff capabilities.
- **Confidentiality** - Upon closing subcontractor contracts, consider the confidentiality of the contracts before potentially sharing with the client.

Practice Activities

- Convene a meeting with project leadership, project managers and appropriate team members
- Discuss activities on the closeout checklist
- Assign leads to relevant activities to make sure the closeout activity is completed
- Conduct a post-project survey
- Compile a completion report showing final status of deliverables, issues, changes, risks, costs, etc.
- Consider rolling unresolved issues and changes into the next phase of the project or into a new project
- Obtain final, formal approvals on deliverables
- Conduct formal contract completion

- Conduct formal administrative closure
- Remove sensitive information from computers and project work areas
- Return borrowed equipment
- Perform configuration audit
- Reassign remaining project staff to other assignments
- Conduct project audit
- Conduct post-project training for project team, customers, and/or operations team
- Regulatory completion requirements
- Conduct lessons learned review meeting
- Conduct a client wrap-up meeting or project completion meeting
- Archive project data
- Perform a team outing to celebrate the completion of the project
- Dispose of sensitive information based on HHS or applicable government polices for sensitive but not classified information