

RCSI Project Management Glossary

This is a glossary of project management terms & acronyms to assist you to effectively manage or participate in Projects.

This is a glossary of project management terms & acronyms. Understanding these terms & acronyms is an important first step towards successful project management & engagement.

# A

**Analysis Phase**

Once the Plans are approved & signed off, the project will move into a Phase of Analysis to determine the current state of the process or system being looked at - for example, what does the house look like now & what would I like instead. Once Analysis is complete, a phase of Design should begin.

**As-Is**

The As-Is state describes what the Process or Technology being changed currently looks like. Mapping out the as-is state is helpful as it educates those involved as to the reality of the issues that exist & gets people on the same page, prior to designing the solution. In addition it allows you to compare where you came from, once the solution is designed & implemented, so it is essential to understand the current environment correctly before attempting to design any changes

**Assumption**

A factor that you consider to be true to enable a Project to proceed, without any proof or verification.

# B

**Balanced Scorecard**

A performance management tool which measures whether the smaller-scale operational activities of a company are aligned with its larger-scale objectives in terms of vision and strategy.

**Baseline**

An approved point against which a project is measured.

**Benefit**

A benefit is the desired result of a project that was created to meet a particular operational need. Benefits are the reason any project is created and implemented.

**Benefits Management**

Benefits Management is the process by which you ensure that your projects deliver what you want. Done effectively, it helps ensure that your project's deliverables give value to the business, and the appropriate return on investment.

**Benefits Realisation**

Benefits realisation ensures the roots of the new business process or system will grow deep and deliver real business value. A project should only be considered completed when the benefits have been delivered to the business and not when the project has just been delivered.

**Business As Usual (BAU)**

BAU means normal conduct of business outside of any changes being implemented.

**Business Case**

A document recording a business problem or opportunity & justifying the need to address this. A Business Case helps to determine whether or not a project justifies an organization’s investment. The Business Case defines the problem and its impact and performs a Cost Benefit Analysis for the proposed solution. The Business Case checks to see that the project aligns with the organizations strategic plans. This would also include details of various possible solutions so that the options can be assessed & the most suitable option selected. It describes the benefits, costs & impact involved.

# C

**CAPEX**

Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) is the amount a company spends to buy fixed assets, or to add

to the value of an existing fixed asset with a useful life, that extends beyond the taxable year. A capitalised cost is a fixed, one-time expense incurred on the purchase of land, buildings, construction, and equipment used in the production of goods or in the rendering of services, which can be written off as depreciation over several accounting periods instead of being charged as an expense in the accounting period in which they occurred. So an Organisation can capitalise Project costs once it is determined that they are one-off project-related costs that would not otherwise be incurred if the project was not in progress. Cost relating to the initiation phase should not be capitalised however once the project kicks off, any costs associated with this work can potentially be capitalised.

**Change Control**

The practice of identifying, documenting, approving and carrying out changes within a project.

**Change Request**

During the execution of the project work, requests for changes may arise from sources such as issues, & may affect certain aspects of the project, such as Scope. These change requests might come from inside or outside the performing organization and can be optional or mandated legally or contractually. These change requests must be approved before they can be processed and implemented.

**Charter**

The Project Charter concisely summarises the scope of the project, gives the Project Manager authority over the project, provides summary milestones, states the project budget & identifies funding sources. This is not a project plan however, it is the starting point that is used to build/develop the project plan, if the project receives approval to proceed.

**Closedown Phase**

Once Implementation is complete, the Project should be closed down & the benefits delivered should be measured. Handover happens in this phase & the current status of all agreed deliverables is documented. Using our house analogy this is where we review the budget & pay the bills, & think about how the work went & look at the new areas of our house. We might also get a new valuation carried out, to assess if our property has increased in value since the renovations. After a designated period of time, the changes should be reviewed in the Post Implementation Review Phase.

**Communication Plan**

A component of the Project Plan/ planning phase that describes how, when & by whom information will be administered & disseminated.

**Constraint**

A restriction that can affect the performance of the project which you cannot change. These may include deadlines, regulatory requirements or dependencies on other projects.

**Consumers**

This group represents those who will benefit from the Changes implemented by the Project Team. This can be people either internal or external to the Organisation. However it is not always possible to involve this group as fully as other Stakeholders therefore Representatives from this group should be involved to ensure appropriate input is received. Internally this would often be those who sit on the Working Group. Externally this group would often take the form of Students or Hospital Staff.

**Contingency; Cost**

A contingency fund is money set aside at the start of a project to be used to offset unforeseen increases in costs, relating to existing Project scope items, such as unknown conditions, allowance for design growth, errors in the contract drawings, inaccurate pricing, or price escalation. To add contingency, typically a percentage of the overall budget is added, of around 15 – 20% - depending on the nature of the project & the level of uncertainty.

**Contingency; Effort**

Additional effort added to the initial estimates provided, when estimating the effort involved in producing Project Deliverables. If no contingency is added, this means estimates are 100% accurate which is rarely true. The level of contingency to be added depends on how complex a task is, how familiar / experienced the person carrying out the task is, & how confident/ certain the person carrying out the task is in relation to their estimate. Effort contingency should be used to allow for unforeseen delays/ refined actual effort involved in producing existing Deliverables within the agreed Project Scope.

**Cost Benefit Analysis**

The cost benefit analysis is used to show the expected benefits of a project are sufficient to warrant the cost of carrying it out. Monetary units are usually used for the comparison.

**Critical Pat**

The critical path is the sequence of activities that must be completed on time for the entire project to be completed on schedule.

**Critical (or Key) Success Factor**

A factor identified as essential to achieving a successful project.

# D

**Deliverable**

A deliverable is a tangible, verifiable work product. The deliverables on a project are the specific work products that must be produced in order to complete the project. These refer to both the Deliverables that are produced as a result of Tasks the Project Team execute, as well as the Project Management documents created during the life of a project. To be verifiable, the deliverable must meet predetermined standards for its completion, such as design specifications for a product or a checklist of steps that is completed as part of a service – so using our house renovation analogy, if you specify that painting the kitchen walls is a Deliverable & determine the standard for completion to be that all walls are painted yellow in matt paint, then this must be achieved for you can mark that Deliverable as complete. The most important thing about identifying Deliverables is that defining them directs Project work to outcomes rather than activities, which focuses work on only the activities that are actually essential to the project.

**Dependency**

A dependency exists when an output from one Project Phase or piece of work is needed as a mandatory input for another Project Phase or piece of work. It is the responsibility of the Project Manager to record, monitor, & manage these dependencies.

**Design Phase**

Once Analysis is complete, a phase of Design should begin, to assess exactly what the new process or system will do. Then the list of rqmts needed to deliver these changes should be identified, documented & agreed. For example, what areas do I need to renovate, what changes or new elements do I want to include & who will make the changes. When the Design is approved & signed off, an Implementation phase begins.

# E

**Effort**

The number of labour units required to complete a WBS component (i.e. Project task/ activity), often expressed in hours or days.

**Enterprise Environmental Factors**

Factors internal or external to the performing organisation that can influence the project’s success, such as the organisation’s culture, infrastructure, existing skill set, market conditions, and project management software. These are input to both the project charter and the project scope statement.

**Executive Sponsor**

This Project Stakeholder would typically be a member of the Senior Management Team & is ultimately responsible for approving the body of work & securing funds if required. The Executive Sponsor champions the project at the highest levels of the organisation & would report to peers at Senior Management Level in relation to the progress of the project.

# F

**Feasibility Study**

A Feasibility Study is often created to help objectively decide whether to proceed with a proposed project. A Feasibility Study should consider things such as technological limitations, the marketplace, your organisational strategy, staffing requirements, schedule and financial projections. The Project Manager can create a Feasibility Study to assist the Organisation choose whether to proceed with a Project or not however input from Key Stakeholders is required to create this document as it covers a number of areas, not all of which the Project Manager will be an expert in.

# G

**Governance**

Project governance is the management framework within which project decisions are made. It helps make sure that a project is executed according to the standards of the organization performing the project. Governance keeps all project activities above board and ethical, and also creates accountability. A project governance structure will also help define a project reporting system. It outlines specific roles and responsibilities for everyone involved in the project. Project managers can leverage a governance structure in their projects to help with setting project priorities.

# H

# I

**Initiation Phase**

A Business Case is identified, outlining a current business need, & a high level proposal is put forth for a project to address this need. To use a common every day example, we can look at the analogy of a renovating a house as the business need & the project proposal could be to address this over the summer months, using some external contractors to complete parts of the work & spend around €15-20k. If the Project gets approval, this will lead to a Planning Phase.

**Implementation Phase**

When the Design is approved & signed off, an Implementation phase begins to produce whatever Deliverables have been agreed, & which will result in achievement of the Project’s goals. This will also involve producing the required documentation to ensure the new state is properly documented & any required Training will take place at this point. So for example, this is where the work is carried out to renovate the house. Once Implementation is complete, the Project should be closed down.

**Issue**

An issue is any problem that arises which must be addressed in order to ensure the project can progress. Issues can develop from Risks that were not appropriately mitigated or they can simply occur independently with no foresight.

**Issue Escalation**

Issue escalation is a formal process to highlight the issue at hand to a higher authority as per the escalation mechanism defined for the project. For example, if a certain project stakeholder is not willing to or is not able to do a certain activity he or she is responsible for, it is necessary to escalate the issue to the superior for resolution.

# J

# K

**Key Stakeholders**

This is any person outside of the identified Project Stakeholders (i.e. Project Manager, Project Team, Working Group, Steering Group, Project Sponsor, Executive Sponsor, Vendors & Consumers), whose involvement is required in some form on the Project & without whom the Project would fail.

**Kick-Off Meeting**

The initial Project meeting with a designated group of Stakeholders, where the Project Manager outlines the plan for that particular group, based on the Work Breakdown Structure identified. This can then be refined as needed & used to create a more accurate Project Plan.

# L

**Lessons Learned**

The Lessons Learned are useful project management information gained through experience on a Project that your organization should retain for future use. Essentially it means asking the question: What worked well & what didn’t work so well? Without assessing this, we cannot increase the productivity or efficiency of the Change Management/Implementation process in an Organisation. Lessons learned should be documented throughout the project lifecycle & collated in a Lessons Learned document at the end of the Project so that this can be provided to the relevant Stakeholders & the Learning can be fed back into future Project work. This can be completed during the Closedown Phase or during the Post Implementation Phase.

# M

**Milestone**

A key event during the life of a project, usually completing project deliverables or other noteworthy achievement. Milestones are different to Deliverables however, in that they’re significant events in the project, not work activities, which signify the verification of completion of a project phase, a task, decision, or deliverable. Milestones help indicate to your Stakeholders what key progress is being made.

# N

# O

**Organisational Process Assets**

The process related assets of the organisation that can be used to perform a project successfully, such as templates, guidelines, knowledge base, and policies and procedures.

# P

**Parallel Run**

Parallel running is a practice of running two business systems or processes side by side during a changeover period, to trial the new system or process alongside the old system or process as back-up.

**Phase**

A collection of logically related Project activities that culminates in the completion of one or more Project Deliverables.

**Plan**

A Project Plan is an all-encompassing document used as the basis for implementing the agreed Project goals. It details how the project will be executed. Included in this are details of the Project Phases, Scope, Milestones, Deliverables, Schedule & Resources. The Project plan can contain subsidiary plans, such as, a risk management plan, a project scope management plan, and a scope baseline.

**Planning Phase**

If the Project gets approval after Initiation, this will lead to a Planning Phase where detailed plans are made in relation to all areas of the project e.g. people involved in carrying out the work, budgets for each area, when work will be completed etc. Once the Plans are approved & signed off, the project will move into a Phase of Analysis.

**Portfolio/ Programme**

A set of projects, programmes and related work that is managed in a coordinated fashion to obtain business objectives in the strategic plan of the organisation.

**Post Implementation Review Phase**

After a designated period of time, the changes should be reviewed in the Post Implementation Review Phase, to assess if they successfully delivered what was intended at the outset & whether the Organisation can learn from how they estimated, planned or implemented a project, for the next project they undertake. This equates to living in the newly renovated house for a while & seeing if the changes are really suitable. This may also lead us to think of more work that’s needed, which is often the case.

**Process**

A set of interrelated activities performed to obtain a specified set of products, results, or services. A process consists of three elements: input, tools & techniques, & output.

**Project**

A work effort made over a finite period of time, with a start & finish point, to create a unique product, service, or result.

**Project Charter**

A document that states the initial requirements to satisfy the stakeholders’ needs and expectations and also formally authorises the project.

**Project Lifecycle**

The series of phases that Project passes through from it’s initiation to it’s closure.

**Project Management**

Application of knowledge, skills, tools & techniques to project activities, in order to meet project objectives.

**Project Manager**

The person who has the overall responsibility for the successful planning, execution and closure of a project. The Project Manager typically ensures that the Project Team deliver the agreed body of work, on time & within budget. They are also responsible for putting together the Project Plan, securing approval of the Deliverables from the Project Sponsor, Communication to all Stakeholders, Risk tracking & Issue escalation, Status Reporting, & Budget Management. This person would report on the progress of the Project to the Project Sponsor & Steering Group.

**Project/ Programme Management Office (PMO)**

An entity in an organisation that is responsible for providing centralised coordinated support to the program managers managing programs and unrelated projects.

**Project Proposal / Statement of Work (SOW)**

A document that describes the products or services to be delivered by the project. This documents in more detail the suggested piece of work required to address the Business opportunity or issue. In this Proposal, the high level Scope of the Project should be agreed & the Project Stakeholders & Project Team Resources required should be outlined, as well as a high level budget & timeline. If the Project goes ahead, the detailed Scope & resource plan can then be agreed in the Project Planning phase. This is an input to developing the project charter and the project scope statement. The SOW is a key governance tool whether it is being used to direct work for a vendor or contractor, or used to direct the work internally. The SOW must contain a high level description of all the work that is expected.

**Project Sponsor**

This Project Stakeholder would usually be the Business Owner/ Head of Dept. & would oversee the delivery carried out by the Project Manager. The person in this role must have adequate knowledge and information about the business and the project to be able to make informed decisions. This person would chair the Steering Group & would report on the progress of the Project to the Executive Sponsor.

**Project Team**

The Project Team is responsible for executing the tasks required to meet the Project Deliverables. This group is directed by the Project Manager & works according to the agreed work-breakdown-structure as outlined in the Project Plan. If a Project Team is not required, the Project Manager must complete this work in addition to the Project Management tasks.

# Q

**Quality Assurance**

Quality assurance is the process of auditing the results from quality control measurements to ensure that the quality requirements are being met.

**Quality Control**

Quality control involves monitoring specific project results to verify whether they meet quality standards.

**Quality Metrics**

This is an operational criterion that defines in specific terms what something (such as a characteristic or a feature) is and how the quality control process measures it. For example, it is not specific enough to say the defects in the product will be minimized. Rather, specifying something such as that no feature will have more than two defects is a measurable criterion and hence a metric. Some examples of quality metrics are cost performance, schedule performance, defect frequency, failure rate, and test coverage. The metrics that you set during quality planning will be used in quality assurance and quality control.

**Quality Planning**

Quality is defined as the degree to which a set of characteristics of project deliverables and objectives fulfil the project requirements, therefore any characteristic that influences the satisfaction of the stakeholders is included in determining the quality on a Project. Quality planning, is used to identify which quality standards are relevant to the project at hand and to determine how to meet these standards. The quality management plan describes how the quality policy for this project will be implemented by the project management team. For example, a project that is finished on time, with everything delivered in scope, and that stayed within its cost is a project with high quality performance.

# R

**RAG Status**

This stands for Red, Amber, Green & is a common reporting status term, referred to as the Traffic Light system. You can assign a colour to Actions, Milestones, Deliverables, Issues etc to give a quick & easy visual aid to communicate where an item is at.

* GREEN: the project is progressing according to plan = we are delivering on time/scope/budget.
* AMBER: there are issues and/or risks that will impact the project if not fixed therefore we are at risk of not delivering on time/scope/budget.
* RED: there are issues and/or risks that are impacting the project right now therefore we will not deliver on time/scope/budget unless they are resolved.

**RAID Log**

A simple project management tool, often in the form of a spreadsheet, used to track Risks, Assumptions, Issues and Dependencies.

**Requirement**

A requirement specifies the capabilities, features or attributes of the project’s deliverables. A requirement is a singular documented physical & functional need that a particular design, product or process must be able to perform.

**Requirements Traceability Matrix**

A document detailing all Project requirements from High Level design through Detailed Design, Testing & Implementation. It links requirements from their origin to the Deliverables that satisfy them.

**Resources**

Everything needed to complete the project, but in particular people.

**Risk**

A risk is any specific event which might occur and thus have a negative impact on your project. Each risk will have an associated probability of occurrence along with an impact on your project if it does materialize. A Project Manager has the responsibility to ensure a Risk Management Process is undertaken, to manage & mitigate risks, along with ensuring risks are routinely and effectively communicated to stakeholders. Risks can be identified in advance & if properly monitored & mitigated, can be prevented from developing into issues. People often don’t realise that they have the ability to affect whether issues develop or not but they do.

**Risk Mitigation**

A risk response strategy that whereby the Project Team acts to reduce the probability of occurrence or impact of a risk.

# S

**Schedule**

A list of Project activities with planned dates, durations, milestones & resources assigned.

**Scope**

The project scope draws the boundaries around the project: what is included and what is not, in delivering a product, service, or results with specified features. A project’s scope defines exactly what a project is intended to accomplish to include all of the requirements and deliverables necessary to achieve the desired result/ Project goal. The project scope is the backbone of the project upon which all of the project’s planning activities are based.

**Scope Creep**

Scope creep is the uncontrolled addition of work, requirements, or deliverables to a project which fall outside of the project’s defined scope. Scope Creep is one of the biggest challenges for a Project Manager therefore it is crucial that Scope is defined, documented & agreed in advance of the Project work commencing, so that any Changes to this can be tracked appropriately. The key to understanding and preventing scope creep is to realize that the more thoroughly a project is planned, the more prepared the project manager and team will be to avoid scope creep.

**Scope Statement**

The project scope statement is a document that defines the scope of a project, including the product scope, by stating what needs to be accomplished by the project. It includes project deliverables, product description, product acceptance criteria, assumptions and constraints, and project exclusions. A Project Manager can create a Scope Statement & have this signed off & approved separately to the project plan at the start of the project if they feel that Scope may pose challenges later on. They can then track back to this if there is a challenge to the scope at a later stage.

**Stakeholder**

An individual/ group or organisation that is affected by the project. A project can have a wide array of stakeholders.

**Stakeholder Management Strategy**

The approach developed to deal with the stakeholders in the best interests of the project.

**Stakeholder Register**

A document that identifies the project stakeholders, their role on the Project and any relevant information about them.

**Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**

This is a detailed explanation of how a policy or process is to be implemented.

**Statement of Work (SOW)/ Project Proposal**

A document that describes the products or services to be delivered by the project. This documents in more detail the suggested piece of work required to address the Business opportunity or issue. In this Proposal, the high level Scope of the Project should be agreed & the Project Stakeholders & Project Team Resources required should be outlined, as well as a high level budget & timeline. If the Project goes ahead, the detailed Scope & resource plan can then be agreed in the Project Planning phase. This is an input to developing the project charter and the project scope statement. The SOW is a key governance tool whether it is being used to direct work for a vendor or contractor, or used to direct the work internally. The SOW must contain a high level description of all the work that is expected.

**Status Reporting**

The process of communicating the status of Project Deliverables & their components (as per the WBS) to Project Stakeholders. Stakeholders need to be aware of what is happening in the project and hence these reports must be shared on a timely/regular basis with all people who need to know the progress. Typically a status report will contain information like; a Progress Overview, Milestone Tracking, RAID details & an Actions List however the relevancy and suitability depend on the stakeholders that are the consumers of these reports.

**Steering Group**

These Stakeholders are typically Management staff & are the decision makers on the Project. The Project Manager would also report to this group on the progress of the Project & would put all key decisions to this group. This group would not meet as frequently (i.e. monthly) but always as a group, given their role in decision making. They are key champions of the Project at Management Level, across the Organisation.

# T

**Testing**

This is the process of analysing a software item to detect the differences between existing & required conditions (i.e., bugs/errors) and to evaluate the features of the software item.

**To-Be**

The To-Be state describes what the new/ future Process or Technology will look like.

**Transition Plan**

A Transition Plan highlights the changes in progress or yet to be implemented & when they take effect, in addition to who owns them. This enables effective integration of changes into BAU & ensures changes are rolled out effectively.

# U

# V

**Variance Analysis**

Analysing the difference between the Project baseline & actual outcome.

**Vendors**

This is any 3rd Party Organisation who is contracted to provide additional services or products to the Project if required. Managing 3rd party vendors is extremely important on any project as they can pose a key risk to the project goals. The deliverables, resourcing commitments, timelines & costs from Vendors should be very clearly documented & agreed up front prior to work commencing, & this must be monitored very closely throughout the project.

# W

**Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)**

The WBS is simply the list of activities & tasks required to complete the Project’s Deliverables. The WBS is not the project schedule, but includes all the work to be done as part of the project regardless of who does it & when it’s done. It should be developed with the project team as this is the main source of expertise & knowledge. A WBS should be very detailed, in that it should contain all activities & tasks a Project Manager needs to monitor & efficiently manage the Project. This means that for example using our house analogy, if renovating a house, you make a list of all activities you think need to be done & then break this down further into the list of tasks needed to complete those activities. However the level of detail you break each activity into depends on what you feel you need to track. So if you take one activity on the project such as ‘renovate kitchen’, you then make a list of all tasks needed to complete this i.e. buy new white goods, paint walls, re-floor, buy fixtures, however if you feel this isn’t clear enough, to efficiently track the progress of the renovations, you should break this down into sub-tasks. So for example, for the activity ‘buy new white goods’ you can break this into the sub-tasks, ‘buy new microwave’, ‘buy new fridge’, ‘buy new washing machine’ etc. So essentially you drill down to the level of task you feel is needed to accurately track & manage the Project. However in general, the rule of thumb is the more detail the better. The activities identified as part of the WBS are used to form the Project Plan.

**Working Group**

This is a group of Stakeholders who provide key process knowledge or expertise to the Project Team/ Manager. This group would be involved quite frequently (i.e. daily or weekly), as their knowledge is key to properly defining the requirements & designing the solution.

# X

# Y

# Z