



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Finance**
Government Procurement

Gateway

Strategic Assessment of a Project

Workbook




ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook supports Gateway review Strategic Assessment of a Project. It is the first in a series of six reviews a project may undergo. It investigates the direction and planned outcomes of a project against a wider program or corporate context. It can be applied to any type of project.

The Gateway review Strategic Assessment of a Project helps to confirm that the way forward is achievable before plans have been finalised.

The checklists in this workbook provide review teams with key areas to explore and suggests evidence to look for. At the same time, they provide the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) with information on the areas the review team will be exploring and the types of documentation expected for a Strategic Assessment of a Project review.

As each project is unique and circumstances vary, this workbook should be used as a guide for appropriate questions and evidence, not a full checklist of mandatory items.



A strategic assessment review helps to confirm the way forward.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF A PROJECT

A project has a definite start and finish date, a clearly defined output and development path and a set of financial and other resources allocated to it.

Every project develops in response to an identified need, generally in the form of having difficulty in meeting a policy target or user demand. The first stage of developing and implementing a solution is to understand exactly what this need entails. Who does it impact? How does it fit with government and departmental policies and objectives? What will success look like?

A natural decision point and opportunity for a review arises once this business need has been identified, scoped and understood. The decision that needs to be made at this point is whether or not to proceed to the next stage of identifying, documenting and justifying solutions in the form of a business case.

Gateway review Strategic Assessment of a Project is aimed at assisting the SRO in reaching this decision. The outcome of the review indicates whether the project team has done enough preparatory work to inform a sound judgement whether or not to proceed. The review should therefore take place after this preparatory work has been completed but before the decision is taken to go ahead with the preparation of a business case.



A project has a set of resources allocated to it.

KEY AREAS OF REVIEW

This review aims to answer the question:

“Is the business need understood with the key objectives and outcomes identified?”

It reviews the following areas:

Outcomes and objectives: Are the objectives and outcomes of the project making the necessary contribution to the overall strategic direction of the agency?

Stakeholders: Is the project supported by the key stakeholders?

Context: Have the project’s objectives and outcomes been considered as part of the wider context of government policy and procurement objectives? Have the project’s objectives and outcomes been considered in the wider context of other projects and broader programs within the agency or other relevant agencies?

Project management: Are there adequate controls in place to correctly lead, manage and monitor the project as a whole and the individual components of the project?

Risk: Are there adequate controls in place to correctly identify and manage the main project risks, including external risks? Have these controls been made available to all relevant stakeholders?

Resourcing: Have adequate provisions been made for the financial and other resource needs of the individual work packages and overall life of the project?

Once the evidence for each of these areas has been considered by the review team, the project is evaluated on its readiness for the next phase and recommendations to this effect are made.

STRUCTURE OF REVIEW

The Gateway review Strategic Assessment of a Project is broken up into the following sections:

- **Policy and business context**
- **Business case and stakeholders**
- **Management of intended outcomes**
- **Risk management**
- **Review of current outcomes**
- **Readiness for next phase.**

The following checklists provide review teams with a range of appropriate questions and evidence to look for in each of the above sections. It also provides the SRO and project teams with a guide as to what the review team will be exploring.

As each project is unique and circumstances vary these questions should be used as a guide rather than a full checklist of mandatory items.



The project's intended outcomes are investigated as part of the review.

1. REVIEW AREA: POLICY AND BUSINESS CONTEXT

Areas to review	Evidence expected
1.1 Is the business strategy to which this project contributes agreed with the project's sponsoring group (e.g. Ministers or the senior executive group) and robust?	<input type="checkbox"/> A clear direction set out in the business strategy, which is owned by key stakeholders and informs all investment in public service reform or organisational change.
1.2 Does the project reflect the current policy and agency environment and does the scope of the project fit with the strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Documented evidence that the sponsoring group has agreed the scope of the project and its alignment with policy objectives, strategy and/or change priorities. <input type="checkbox"/> Where there are significant changes in policy priorities, stakeholders' views or the key objectives; evidence that there has been a re-appraisal of the project.
1.3 Is the governance framework fit for purpose and in particular is there commitment to key roles and responsibilities for this project within current corporate priorities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment from the sponsoring group (e.g. senior management, key partners and ministers), its willingness to take ownership and a clear understanding of its role in achieving outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/> Key roles have been identified and assigned (e.g. SRO, Project Director, Project Manager, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> For inter-agency projects, evidence that all parties involved know how they are part of the project and are committed to its delivery; and of clear governance arrangements ensuring sustainable alignment with the business objectives of all agencies involved.

1.4 Are the required skills and capabilities for this project available, taking account of the agency's current commitments and capacity to deliver?

- The agency is bringing together the skills and capabilities it needs to plan and achieve the desired outcomes and has access to external sources of expertise where necessary.
- The agency is realistic about the complexity of the changes and how they can be managed (learning from previous/other projects where appropriate).
- Key roles are identified with named individuals.
- Key individuals have an appropriate track record of successful delivery.
- Appropriate allocation of key roles between internal staff and consultants or contractors.

1.5 Is the agency able to learn from experience with this project and other projects?

- Processes are in place to incorporate lessons learned from this project into wider best practice.
- Details of issues identified from previous similar projects that may be applicable and how they have been considered within the current project.
- The agency learns from the experiences of others.

1.6 Is there a framework for managing issues and risk to this project?

- Defined roles, responsibilities and processes for managing issues and risk across the project, with clearly defined routes for bringing issues and risks to the attention of senior management.

2. REVIEW AREA: BUSINESS CASE AND STAKEHOLDERS

Areas to review	Evidence expected
2.1 Is there a clear understanding of the outcomes to be delivered by the project and are they soundly based?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> A description of the project's business/policy drivers/ objectives and how they contribute to the overall objectives of senior management for a particular public service or the agency's change agenda.<input type="checkbox"/> An outline of the required outputs/outcomes and their relationship to each other.<input type="checkbox"/> Definition of the benefit profiles for the project, for each of the benefits expected.<input type="checkbox"/> For policy implementation, a rationale and objectives statement, appraisal of options and evaluation plan for the option being pursued.<input type="checkbox"/> Where applicable, description of linkage to government performance and delivery targets and/or commitments of senior management.
2.2 Does the project demonstrate a clear link with wider government objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Analysis to show the project's relationship to relevant inter-agency government policies and programs (internal and external).<input type="checkbox"/> Options identified that reflect the requirements of the government's public service reform initiatives.<input type="checkbox"/> Account has been taken of relevant impact assessment and appraisal issues.<input type="checkbox"/> Linkage between strategic objectives and outcomes and the project's deliverables.

2.3 Is there an understanding of the scope of the project?

- A description of the project scope as far as it is known – what is in and out of scope?

2.4 What will constitute success?

- Definition of key critical success factors and how the required quality of performance will be measured.
 - Description of main outcomes and analysis of the leading and lagging indicators of them.
 - Relationship between project outcomes and government targets or major policy initiatives, where applicable.
 - Projected performance over the life of the project, with key performance targets and measures agreed with stakeholders.
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2.5 Who are the stakeholders and are they supportive?

- A list of key stakeholders and statements of their needs and support for the project.
 - Plan for communicating with and involving stakeholders in appropriate ways and securing common understanding and agreement.
 - For inter-agency projects, clear lines of accountability for resolving any conflicting stakeholder requirements.
 - Recognition of the need to involve external delivery partners and industry, plus the supply side where appropriate.
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2.6 What are the component projects and sub-projects of the project and why is it structured in this way?

- Description of project streams and/or sub-projects with explanation of how each will contribute to the required outcomes; key deliverables and identification of key interdependencies.
- Implementation is broken up into manageable steps with phased delivery and avoiding ‘big bang’ approaches.

2.7 Is the proposed project affordable?

- An estimate of the project cost based on previous experience/comparison with other similar projects, broken down as appropriate by project strands and/or sub-projects.
- Available funds identified and methods of securing additional necessary funding determined.
- Provision in current spending review allocation including an allowance for risk.
- Market soundings and assessment of likely cost profiles.

2.8 What are the additional factors that could affect success?

- Main risks and risk owners identified at the outset; options for mitigating these risks considered; need recognised for contingency plans and where appropriate, business continuity plans.
- Description of dependencies/other factors/projects already under way that could affect the outcomes of the project.
- Engagement with delivery chains and/or the market to determine capability to meet the need and where appropriate, to identify suitable options for delivery.
- Where suppliers/partners are already in place, evidence that their ability to deliver has been considered.
- The legal framework for the project exists, is comprehensive and sound.

2.9 Have project controls been determined, especially where constituent projects will be 'joined up' with other agencies?

- Overall project controls defined (progress tracking, risk management, issue identification and resolution and impact assessment).
- Interdependencies between other projects defined with high-level plans for managing them.
- For collaborative projects accountabilities and governance arrangements for all parties defined and agreed.
- Parties in the delivery chain identified and an approach to them working together established.
- Processes to manage and record key project information and decision-making.

3. REVIEW AREA: MANAGEMENT OF INTENDED OUTCOMES

Areas to review	Evidence expected
3.1 Have the main outcomes been identified?	<input type="checkbox"/> Up to date list of the main outcomes and desired benefits, linked to strategic outcomes and to deliverables from specific projects.
3.2 Are key stakeholders confident that outcomes will be achieved when expected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanisms for collecting performance data in place and a plan for evaluating impact of project in operation. <input type="checkbox"/> Steering committee confident that planned milestones will result in good quality deliverables that will in turn, deliver the necessary outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment from key stakeholders that project deliverables will achieve the desired outcomes.
3.3 Is there a plan for achieving the required outcomes?	<input type="checkbox"/> A benefits management strategy and KPIs. <input type="checkbox"/> Plans to identify appropriate baseline measures against which future performance will be assessed. <input type="checkbox"/> Where planned outcomes have not been achieved, evidence that the problems have been identified and plans are in place to resolve them. <input type="checkbox"/> Clarity on how the objectives from the sub-projects link to the outcomes of the project.

4. REVIEW AREA: RISK MANAGEMENT

Areas to review	Evidence expected
4.1 Have the major risks been identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Up to date list of major risks to the overall project (strategic, political/reputational and legislative) analysed by likelihood and impact.<input type="checkbox"/> The risks of success (e.g. take-up or usage greater than expected) have been considered and contingencies/early warning indicators identified.<input type="checkbox"/> Regular review of risks, mitigation options and contingency plans are documented.
4.2 How will risks be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Identification of a governance framework, procedures for risk management in the project and allocation of responsibilities.<input type="checkbox"/> Details of the risk allocation (to whom allocated and why) with high level plans for managing them.<input type="checkbox"/> Action to manage the risks identified and where appropriate, taken.<input type="checkbox"/> Escalation procedures are documented.
4.3 Have assurance measures for the project been put in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> 'Critical friends' to the project (e.g. internal audit, procurement, specialists and/or peer reviewers co-opted onto the Steering Committee) appointed with evidence that they challenge assumptions, decisions and risks.<input type="checkbox"/> Gateway reviews, health-checks and/or policy reviews incorporated into plans.<input type="checkbox"/> Review recommendations are turned into action plans.<input type="checkbox"/> Advice from 'critical friends' is acted upon.<input type="checkbox"/> Where appropriate, evidence of audit arranging for complementary assurance (about control and processes) from audit functions through the delivery chain.<input type="checkbox"/> Project is subject to the agency's assurance framework for its portfolio of programs and projects.<input type="checkbox"/> Market/supply considerations are understood and acted upon.

4.4 Is there a contingency plan and where appropriate, business continuity plans?

- Decisions about contingency and if necessary business continuity arrangements made with appropriate plans.
- Project's effect on public services analysed and decisions taken about those for which contingency arrangements will be needed.
- Milestones relating to contingency measures in plans and the milestones being achieved as expected.

5. REVIEW AREA: REVIEW OF CURRENT OUTCOMES

Areas to review	Evidence expected
5.1 Is the project on track?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Project report and plan updated.<input type="checkbox"/> Milestones achieved as planned.<input type="checkbox"/> Plan for benefits measurement and achievement is on track.<input type="checkbox"/> Risk register is up to date.<input type="checkbox"/> Highlight reports for constituent work streams.<input type="checkbox"/> Resources and funding used to date.<input type="checkbox"/> Issues being resolved.<input type="checkbox"/> Confidence from delivery partners that future milestones and plans are realistic.<input type="checkbox"/> Interdependencies with other projects are being managed.
5.2 Have problems occurred and if so, how have they been resolved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Issues documented with details of action taken.<input type="checkbox"/> Governance framework with escalation routes to senior management.<input type="checkbox"/> Project plan updated to reflect changing issues and risks.<input type="checkbox"/> Recommendations from any earlier assessment of deliverability actioned.
5.3 Have options for potential ways forward been identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of various solutions including policy, asset and non-asset options.<input type="checkbox"/> Comparison of retention maintenance and replacement indicative costs.<input type="checkbox"/> Options analysis or feasibility studies (may or may not be available at this stage).

6. REVIEW AREA: READINESS FOR NEXT PHASE

Areas to review	Evidence expected
6.1 Is there a clear need for the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> The desired outcomes of the project are still aligned to the agency's strategy. <input type="checkbox"/> Clear commitment from stakeholders.
6.2 What assumptions have been made about the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> A listing of major assumptions made in preparing the project brief, updated to reflect any changes that could affect success, together with current assessments of the validity of all assumptions.
6.3 How will change be managed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Plans for managing the transition to new ways of working/structures/policies with any key barriers identified (such as cultural resistance to change) and the approach to overcoming them agreed.
6.4 Affordability: are the funds to reach the next phase available?	<input type="checkbox"/> Budget provision for the project. <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate approaches for estimating, monitoring and controlling the expenditure on the project.
6.5 Are the required internal/external individuals suitably skilled, available and committed to carrying out the work?	<input type="checkbox"/> Information showing who needs to be involved, when and what they must deliver. <input type="checkbox"/> Identification of the key skills (specialist and management) required for the next phase of the project. <input type="checkbox"/> Key roles in place with skills matched to the nature of the work. <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of resources when needed throughout the next phase.
6.6 Achievability: Are the plans for the next phase realistic?	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan developed showing streams of work, deliverables/ milestones and the route map to achieve them, timescales, costs and resourcing, stakeholder involvement, risk management and benefits management. <input type="checkbox"/> The robustness of the plans has been tested and found to be adequate.
6.7 Are appropriate management controls in place?	<input type="checkbox"/> Accountabilities allocated to SRO. <input type="checkbox"/> Project management controls and reporting mechanisms defined and operational. <input type="checkbox"/> Plans for ongoing management of the delivery chain are in place.
6.8 Where procurement is a part of the project: how is capability and capacity for acquisition to be managed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Procurement innovation and sustainability issues have been considered. <input type="checkbox"/> Market management plan in place and evidence that a good understanding exists of supply side capability and capacity.

PROJECT DOCUMENTS

Examples of evidence expected for each area should be available before the review starts.

The following is a range of information which would typically be required by the review team:

- **Project objectives** Description of the purposes, outcomes sought, key deliverables and timescales, plus the main success criteria against which the project will be measured.
- **Background** Outline of the key drivers for the project, showing how it will contribute to policy outcomes or the business strategy.
- **Outcomes** A model of the intended outcome(s) as a vision of the future and how the vision will be delivered through the agency(s) involved, delivery agents, new services, etc.
- **Scope** Parametres of the project.
- **Required benefits** To be elaborated on in a profile for each defined benefit, covering a description, a timeframe and the measures and performance indicators that will be used to assess achievement levels and their costs.
- **Assumptions/constraints** On which the project will be founded and dependencies with other projects or strategies.
- **Stakeholders** List of the key stakeholders and their role in the project, with a strategy and plan for communicating and engaging with them.
- **Finance** The financial provision made for the project and its components.
- **Public Authority** The way in which the project is to be organised, led and linked into other related projects.
- **Risks** The main risks so far identified, a strategy for managing them and need for any contingency arrangements.
- **Issues** Strategy for capturing and resolving issues.
- **Outcomes** Strategy for measuring results and achieving outcomes.
- **Components** List of the projects in the portfolio and interdependencies that have to be delivered successfully if the project is to achieve its objectives and their current status.
- **Workplan** Covering the work to be done over the short/medium term including the identification of the streams of work and sub-projects; the main deliverables and milestones for each of these and the contribution each is to make to the project outcomes.
- **Resource estimates** Funding, people, systems, etc.

This information is likely to be found in the documents suggested below, but may be located elsewhere in the agency's documentation system:

- Relevant government policy, report or strategy
- The business strategy and business plan where applicable: this should set out the agency's strategy and policy objectives in relation to a set of public services or explain the objectives of the agency's change agenda
- A project outline/plan: this document will be loosely formed at the outset and developed over the life of the project.

