

# Commissioning Resourcing Map

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## Executive Summary

The Western Australia (WA) Commissioning Resourcing Map provides a structured and consistent framework for agencies to plan, budget, and resource commissioning projects. Commissioning effort varies significantly between initiatives, often leading to uncertainty in planning and budget decisions. This framework addresses this uncertainty by establishing a common approach to assess commissioning project complexity and determine the appropriate level of resourcing required for success.

The framework plots projects based on two key dimensions:

- **'External Challenge'** (contextual factors like market conditions and geography); and
- **'Design Complexity'** (strategic choices about a project's scale and novelty).

This assessment results in a recommended resourcing level, ranging from **Essential** to **High**, ensuring that the investment in commissioning effort is proportionate to the complexity of the task.

By guiding agencies through the commissioning cycle and integrating a clear rationale for the investment of commissioning resources, the framework strengthens business cases and improves outcomes. It is tailored to Western Australia's unique context, accounting for regional, remote, and cultural considerations to support effective and equitable service delivery across the state.



## 1. Background and Context

The Western Australian government invests in a diverse portfolio of community services to meet the needs of the community. The process of planning, purchasing, managing, monitoring, and evaluating services, known as commissioning, is a critical function of government. However, the complexity of this work can vary enormously from one project to the next. For example, a simple contract renewal for an established service in a metropolitan area requires a vastly different level of effort compared to designing a new, transformational health service in a remote region with a limited provider market.

Often, this variation has led to inconsistencies in how agencies plan for and resource their commissioning activities. Without a common framework to assess complexity, projects are at risk of being under-resourced, leading to potential delays, budget overruns, and suboptimal service outcomes. This inconsistency creates challenges for central agencies like the Department of Treasury and Finance when assessing proposals for funding. It also creates uncertainty in the sector as agencies inevitably start and stop commissioning activities based on resourcing.

The Commissioning Resourcing Map has been developed to address these challenges. It provides a clear, consistent, framework to understand resourcing with project complexity, setting initiatives up for success from the very beginning.

**The Commissioning Resourcing Map is intended to provide advice and guidance only, for consideration when determining appropriate resourcing levels. The resourcing needed for a commissioning process will vary by individual agency needs and the context of the services being commissioned.**

## 2. Purpose and Intended Audience

The primary purpose of the Commissioning Resourcing Map is to provide a shared framework that enables government agencies to:

- **Assess project complexity:** Assess the key factors that drive commissioning effort.
- **Determine appropriate resourcing:** Justify the required level of capability, funding, and staffing needed for a project.
- **Improve planning and budgeting:** Develop stronger business cases for funding proposals.
- **Build commissioning capability:** Foster a more consistent approach to commissioning across the WA public sector.
- **Capacity across phases:** Ensure the right staffing and capability are maintained across all phases of commissioning to support consistent outcomes-focused commissioning.

This framework is designed for two main audiences:

- **Line agencies:** Staff, teams and officials within WA government departments who are responsible for developing business cases and delivering commissioning projects.
- **Central agencies:** Officials and staff who review funding proposals. They can use this framework's outputs to assess proposals consistently.

### 3. How the Commissioning Resource Map works: the core concepts

At its heart, the Commissioning Resource Map is a tool for understanding and categorising complexity. It does this by assessing a project against two fundamental dimensions that together capture the main drivers of commissioning effort.

#### Dimension 1: External Challenge (the Context)

This dimension captures the environmental realities and inherited challenges that a commissioning project must navigate. These are factors outside an agency's direct control or the pre-existing conditions of the environment that commissioners must respond to and plan for. A higher level of external challenge demands more sophisticated planning, engagement, and management. Key factors include:

- **Population needs:** The size, diversity, and severity of needs of service users in the target community and how well these needs are understood.
- **Service user needs:** The level of vulnerability, risk, and complexity experienced by individuals and the extent to which multi-agency or culturally specific support is required.
- **Market conditions:** The availability, capability, and stability of service providers in the market. This is a critical factor in WA, where markets can be thin or non-existent in regional and remote areas and where ACCOs may require additional engagement and resourcing.
- **Geography and logistics:** The physical distances, travel requirements, and logistical difficulties associated with the commissioning project's location, as well as in situ conditions (e.g. assets, internet, and accommodation).
- **Stakeholder complexity:** The number and diversity of stakeholders, including community members, other government agencies, community service organisations, advisory groups, peak bodies, and the dynamics of their relationships.
- **Cultural governance:** The cultural decision-making structures, protocols, and relationships with Aboriginal communities and ACCOs, which often require additional time, engagement, and resourcing across all phases of commissioning.

Higher levels of external challenge require longer timeframes for commissioning.

#### Dimension 2: Design Complexity (the Choices)

This dimension captures the strategic choices made by the agency about the project's scale, scope, and novelty, which together determine its complexity. These are the "levers" or "dials" that that commissioners can intentionally adjust during the planning and design phase to set the ambition and complexity of the work. Higher design complexity requires greater investment in design, co-design, and governance. Key factors include, for example:

- **Scale of investment:** The size of the budget and the duration of the project.

- **Scope of change:** Whether the project is a simple continuation of an existing service or a system-wide change or reform (including where existing agreements are outdated or no longer fit for purpose).
- **Level of innovation:** The degree to which the project involves new or untested service models, technologies, or approaches.
- **Extent of co-design:** The depth of engagement required with stakeholders, particularly service users and community members, to collaboratively design the solution.
- **Number of service providers and contracts:** The number and complexity of provider arrangements that must be redesigned, procured, transitioned, and managed.
- **Place-based variation:** The extent to which service models, key performance indicators, or contractual arrangements must be tailored for different regions, communities, or cultural contexts, which requires additional effort across all phases of commissioning.
- **Age and condition of existing contracts:** Whether current contracts are contemporary and aligned to policy, or outdated and requiring substantial uplift or redevelopment.
- **System complexity:** The degree of interdependencies across agencies, pathways, or systems (e.g., homelessness, justice, family violence) and the consequences of service disruption.

Higher levels of design complexity require longer timeframes for commissioning.



## The Commissioning Resourcing Map: determining the level of effort

By assessing a project against the External Challenge and Design Complexity dimensions, it can be placed on a simple three-by-three matrix. This position on the matrix corresponds to a recommended level of resourcing intensity, ensuring it is commensurate and proportionate to the task.

**Commissioning Resourcing Matrix**

<p>Level of <b>Design Complexity</b> Higher levels require a longer timeframe</p> <p><b>High</b> <i>System-level change, high innovation, and state-wide scale</i></p> <p><b>Medium</b> <i>Enhancing services, moderate innovation, and scale</i></p> <p><b>Low</b> <i>Simple continuation, low innovation, and local scale</i></p>	<p><b>Moderate</b> <i>Dedicated core team with supporting expertise</i></p>	<p><b>Significant</b> <i>Dedicated core team with senior supporting expertise</i></p>	<p><b>High</b> <i>Large, dedicated core team with embedded senior expert team</i></p>
	<p><b>Low-Moderate</b> <i>Small part-time team, generalist focus</i></p>	<p><b>Moderate</b> <i>Dedicated core team with supporting expertise</i></p>	<p><b>Significant</b> <i>Dedicated core team with senior supporting expertise</i></p>
	<p><b>Essential</b> <i>Minimal effort, part of existing duties</i></p>	<p><b>Low-Moderate</b> <i>Small part-time team, generalist focus</i></p>	<p><b>Moderate</b> <i>Dedicated core team with supporting expertise</i></p>
	<p><b>Low</b> <i>Stable context, few external pressures</i></p>	<p><b>Medium</b> <i>Some uncertainty, moderate external pressures</i></p>	<p><b>High</b> <i>Challenging context, many external pressures.</i></p>
	<p>Level of <b>External Challenge</b> Higher levels require a longer timeframe</p> <p>→</p>		

To keep the framework practical, the nine cells of the matrix are grouped into five clear resourcing levels. This approach provides a clear, defensible rationale for why one project might require a small part-time team while another needs a large, dedicated core team with embedded senior experts over several years:

- **Essential:** For straightforward commissioning projects with low external challenge and low design complexity, such as a simple contract renewal or variation in a stable market, delivered as a uniform state-wide service.
- **Low-Moderate:** For projects with some elements of complexity, such as adapting an existing service or working in a market with a limited number of providers, with minor adjustments to reflect regional delivery requirements.
- **Moderate:** For projects with a considerable degree of challenge or design complexity, requiring a dedicated team and structured project management, with meaningful variation to service models, engagement, or contracting within regions.
- **Significant:** For highly challenging or complex projects that require expert skills, extensive stakeholder engagement, proactive market development, and tailoring across multiple locations, communities, or cultural settings.
- **High:** For the most complex undertakings, such as major system reforms in challenging contexts (e.g. remote) or services (e.g. high-risk). These projects demand a multi-disciplinary team and significant upfront investment in planning and design to manage risk, with bespoke adaptation of service models and contracts for remote, culturally governed, or highly diverse communities.

Most commissioning processes will need expertise in procurement, policy, data, monitoring, and evaluation, except for extension by variation following a Preferred Service Provider (PSP) approach.

### Resourcing implications by level

As a commissioning project moves from Essential to High, the nature and intensity of resourcing change significantly. The investment grows not just in size (e.g. FTE) but also in the depth of subject matter expertise, leadership, and strategic oversight required.

Across all levels, core commissioning capabilities remain essential, including policy expertise, contract management, commercial acumen, and engagement skills. However, the depth of expertise required (e.g. the combination of experience, deep knowledge, formal qualifications, and practical skills required to perform a task to a high standard) increases as complexity grows.

- **Essential level:** Effort is minimal and often absorbed into the day-to-day duties of a single project officer. The focus is on executing simple, transactional tasks efficiently.
- **Low-Moderate level:** Requires a small, often part-time team. While still led by generalists, there is a need for some dedicated project coordination and access to expert advice as needed.
- **Moderate level:** A dedicated core team becomes necessary. This team requires structured project management and includes a mix of generalist and increasingly expert roles to manage the increased complexity.

- **Significant Level:** A larger, dedicated, multi-disciplinary team is essential. The team is composed primarily of experts in their fields (e.g., service designers, data analysts, senior procurement experts) and requires a senior project manager to lead coordination work across multiple workstreams.
- **High Level:** Requires a large, dedicated, and highly expert team operating over a long duration. It demands senior leadership oversight, deep subject matter and cultural expertise, and a range of expert roles working together to drive strategic reform.

Lower resourcing levels than those required for a specific commissioning process will typically extend the timeframe in which commissioning can be completed.



## 4. The commissioning cycle: a step-by-step guide

The commissioning cycle organises all commissioning activities into a six-stage lifecycle. This provides a consistent roadmap for all projects and allows resourcing needs to be planned phase by phase. The intensity and focus of activities at each stage vary depending on the project's overall resourcing level.

### Resourcing focus by level and stage

The table below summarises the resourcing focus across the commissioning cycle against the Commissioning Resource Matrix.

#### Summary of Resourcing Focus by Level and Stage

Resourcing Level	Identify needs and plan	Communicate intentions	Co-design services	Procure and contract	Manage and monitor	Review and evaluate	Across All Stages
<b>High</b>	Intensive needs analysis and community engagement, including systems mapping to identify priority needs.	Multi-agency business case development, benchmarking, and cost modelling.	Intensive co-design workshops with diverse stakeholders, prototyping new models.	Complex, multi-stage procurement (e.g., alliance), proactive market development.	Management of outcomes, and support for complex service transitions, including ACCOs.	Major external evaluation, system-level lessons learned, return on investment analysis.	Executive leadership, Project Director, communications, cultural liaison, data team.
<b>Significant</b>	Detailed needs analysis and stakeholder research to understand and prioritise needs.	Single-agency business case development, with benchmarking and cost modelling.	Structured co-design sessions, service model specification.	Strategic sourcing, multi-stage procurement process.	Management of outcomes with improvement focus and planned provider transition support.	Formal outcome evaluation and an action plan responding to findings.	Senior Project Manager, expert leads (engagement, procurement).
<b>Moderate</b>	Desktop research and targeted consultation on needs and service priorities.	Standard business case, access to benchmarking and cost modelling.	Targeted co-design activities to refine the service model and confirm feasibility.	Standard open tender process for service agreements or panel contracts.	Contract management and performance monitoring, building existing provider capability.	Internal service review or small external evaluation with benefits realisation check.	Dedicated Project Manager with access to experts as needed.
<b>Low-moderate</b>	Review of existing data and informal consultation to confirm needs.	Simple briefing note with scope definition, basic costing, and data validation.	Light-touch consultation on small refinements to service model.	Simple RFQ or limited tender with procurement advice.	Standard contract administration with routine check-ins and capability support.	Informal internal review of outcomes and identification of minor service improvements.	Part-time Project Lead and generalist team.
<b>Essential</b>	Confirmation of ongoing need with appropriate stakeholder input.	Streamlined renewal process and briefing note for approval.	Minor updates to the service model informed by feedback.	Direct negotiation or simple renewal process with the Preferred Service Provider (PSP).	Basic contract administration and relationship maintenance, and light oversight.	Light internal service review confirming alignment with need.	Policy Officer integrating commissioning tasks alongside core responsibilities.



## Across all stages: resources to maintain the 'golden thread' of commissioning

A critical risk in any commissioning process is that the original intent becomes diluted or lost as the project moves through its lifecycle. The deep understanding of community needs uncovered during the analysis phase can be disconnected from the final service delivered if there are handovers between different teams (e.g., from a policy team to a procurement team, then to a contract manager), or as resourcing shifts over time (e.g. natural attrition).

To mitigate this risk, it is essential to maintain a '**golden thread**'; a clear and unbroken line of sight from the initial needs analysis to the final evaluation of outcomes. This requires a resource that stays with the project from beginning to end.

For less complex projects, this may be a single **Project Officer** or equivalent. For the most complex initiatives, a Project Director and a core team provide this continuity. This 'golden thread' role is responsible for holding the project's vision and ensuring that every decision made from design to procurement to contract management, is tested against the fundamental question: *"How does this help us better meet the needs we identified at the start?"*

This continuity is a vital investment. It ensures the integrity of the commissioning process and provides the best possible chance that the commissioned service will deliver its intended impact.

- **Purpose:** To provide consistent leadership and vision across the entire commissioning cycle, ensuring the project's original intent and focus on needs are maintained from start to finish.
- **Knowledge and skills required:** A broad understanding of the end-to-end commissioning process, strategic thinking, governance, benefits management, and sophisticated stakeholder relationship management at all levels (from community to executive).
- **Mindset and behaviours needed:** Resilience, tenacity, and strategic influencing skills. This role acts as the custodian of the project's purpose, requiring a systems-thinking perspective and the ability to navigate complex organisational dynamics.
- **Typical role titles:** Project Officer, Commissioning Officer, Project Director, Program Manager, Senior Responsible Owner (SRO).
- **Outcome:** The commissioning project's original intent is maintained, ensuring the final service directly addresses the identified community needs and achieves its intended impact.

## Stage 1: Identify needs and plan

- **Purpose:** To clearly define the problem to be solved and build the case for change. This includes transparent and consultative needs analysis, drawing on relevant data, community insights, and service user perspectives to prioritise needs and identify service responses. This stage also includes developing an initial, high-level program logic and outcomes sought to guide later service design and evaluation planning.
- **Knowledge and skills required:** Strong quantitative and qualitative research methods, including data analysis, surveys, interviews and expertise in data analysis and visualisation. Systems thinking to map complex problems and applying needs assessment frameworks. Skills in developing a logic model that clarifies how the commissioning initiative is intended to create impact.
- **Mindset and behaviours needed:** Deep curiosity to look beyond surface-level problems, empathy to understand lived experiences, and the critical thinking skills to remain objective. A people-centred approach and comfort with ambiguity are essential.
- **Typical role titles:** Policy Officer, Data Analyst, Community Engagement Lead, Researcher, Service Designer, Service Planner.
- **Outcome:** A clear needs assessment that defines the objectives for the commissioning process. Includes a high-level program logic that sets the foundation for detailed design and later evaluation.

## Stage 2: Communicate intentions

- **Purpose:** To set clear objectives, define the project's scope, and develop a high-level plan. This includes appraising different options, assessing risks, and securing internal agreement on the preferred approach. It involves preparing the analytical foundations for government decision-making (e.g. benchmarking, jurisdictional research, and initial costing) to support the development of a compelling case for investment. This stage also includes communicating intentions to the market to ensure providers are aware of upcoming opportunities.
- **Knowledge and skills required:** Strategic planning and options analysis, financial modelling and cost-benefit analysis, risk assessment and mitigation planning, and benefits realisation planning. Expertise in developing investment logic maps and robust business cases. Additional skills include benchmarking service models, understanding the drivers of service costs, preparing pricing, and costing options for government consideration, and undertaking interjurisdictional research to inform best practice.
- **Mindset and behaviours needed:** A strong focus on outcomes, structured and organised thinking, and the ability to be pragmatic and persuasive. Foresight to anticipate future challenges and clear communication skills to build consensus.
- **Typical role titles:** Project Manager, Business Analyst, Policy Lead, Strategic Planner, Finance Business Partner, Commissioning Manager.
- **Outcome:** An agreed commissioning plan or business case that prioritises investment and defines what success will look like. This includes clear options for government, with indicative costings, evidence from benchmarking or jurisdictional scans, and a compelling rationale for the recommended approach.

### Stage 3: Co-design services

- **Purpose:** To work collaboratively with stakeholders, including service users, community service organisations, ACCOs and partners, to co-design the service model. This ensures the service is fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate, and meets user needs.
- **Knowledge and skills required:** Expertise in human-centred design and co-design methodologies, workshop facilitation, prototyping and testing, customer journey mapping, and writing clear and effective service specifications.
- **Mindset and behaviours needed:** Highly collaborative, creative, and adaptable. Must be an excellent active listener, inclusive in their approach, and comfortable with an iterative process where control is shared with community and stakeholders.
- **Typical role titles:** Service Designer, Community Engagement Lead, Cultural Liaison Officer, Co-design Facilitator, User Researcher, Subject Matter Expert.
- **Outcome:** A detailed service model ready to go to market.

### Stage 4: Procure and contract

- **Purpose:** To execute the procurement strategy to select and contract the best possible provider(s). This involves developing a clear procurement plan, managing the tender process, evaluating proposals, negotiating, and establishing a formal contract or agreement. This stage also includes preparing service specifications, developing performance indicators, defining reporting requirements, and drafting pricing or fee schedules to ensure clarity and alignment between commissioners and providers.
- **Knowledge and skills required:** Procurement is required at all levels of commissioning, with the depth of expertise increasing as the complexity of the procurement task grows. Deep expertise in government procurement rules and processes, various procurement strategies, contract law, commercial negotiation, and robust probity management is required at higher levels of complexity. Skills in writing fit-for-purpose service specifications, designing key performance indicators and performance measures, and preparing pricing schedules or cost-model structures.
- **Mindset and behaviours needed:** Strong commercial acumen, diligent attention to detail, and an unwavering ethical approach. Must be a skilled and fair negotiator who is risk-aware and focused on achieving value for money.
- **Typical role titles:** Procurement Officer, Legal Advisor, Project Manager, Commercial Manager, Probity Advisor, Contract Manager.
- **Outcome:** A service agreement or equivalent contract or agreement with the chosen provider(s), including clear performance frameworks. The contract includes well-defined service specifications, KPIs, and pricing schedules that provide a clear basis for ongoing contract management and performance monitoring.

## Stage 5: Manage and monitor

- **Purpose:** To oversee service delivery, manage the relationship with the provider, and drive continuous improvement. This involves monitoring performance, tracking outcomes, and ensuring the service adapts to changing needs, including managing any planned transitions into new or redesigned services (particularly for ACCOs where appropriate).
- **Knowledge and skills required:** Strong contract and relationship management skills, developing and implementing performance monitoring frameworks, provider capacity building, and conflict resolution. Understanding of outcomes measurement.
- **Mindset and behaviours needed:** Solutions-focused and adaptable to changing circumstances on the ground. A strong relationship builder who is supportive of providers while also holding them accountable for results.
- **Typical role titles:** Contract Manager, Service Delivery Lead, Relationship Manager, Partnership Manager, Quality Improvement Officer, Program Coordinator.
- **Outcome:** Assurance that commissioning objectives are being met, with positive experiences and improved outcomes achieved from the investments made throughout the life of the contract.

## Stage 6: Review and evaluate

- **Purpose:** To measure the impact of the service and learn from the process. This involves reviewing and evaluating whether the intended outcomes were achieved and identifying successes, challenges, and insights that can inform future commissioning.
- **Knowledge and skills required:** Expertise in evaluation design, including formative and summative evaluation approaches. Strong skills in quantitative and qualitative data analysis, Return on Investment (ROI) methods, and knowledge translation to share learnings effectively.
- **Mindset and behaviours needed:** Objective, reflective, and inquisitive. A commitment to continuous improvement and a willingness to be honest about both successes and failures. Focused on capturing and sharing knowledge to improve future work.
- **Typical role titles:** Evaluation Officer, Data Analyst, Policy Officer, Monitoring and Evaluation Lead, Performance Advisor.
- **Outcome:** Evaluation findings that "close the loop" by feeding back into the next commissioning cycle, including informing both future commissioning design and any internal service review processes.

## Variation in resourcing across levels

The scale and nature of the roles and skills required change significantly with the complexity of the project. As the complexity increases, so does the required type of skills. At lower levels, a single officer can cover multiple functions, while at higher levels you need increasingly expert skills. See Appendix B for an exemplar.

Resourcing Level	Scale of resources (Illustrative purposes only)	Nature of resources (Team Composition)	Leadership & Oversight
<b>Essential</b>	<1 FTE (part of an existing role)	<b>Generalist:</b> A single officer handles all tasks.	Standard line management.
<b>Low-moderate</b>	1-2 FTE (often part-time with an existing role)	<b>Mostly generalist:</b> A small team with access to expert advice as needed (e.g. procurement).	A designated Lead provides coordination.
<b>Moderate</b>	2-4 FTE (dedicated team)	<b>Mixed team:</b> A core of generalists supported by key expert roles (e.g., procurement, design).	A dedicated Manager with formal oversight.
<b>Significant</b>	4-6 FTE (dedicated team)	<b>Primarily experts:</b> A multi-disciplinary expert team directed by a senior leader.	Senior Program Manager or Leader with regular reporting to executive leaders.
<b>High</b>	6+ FTE (dedicated team)	<b>Deep expertise:</b> A large, multi-disciplinary team with senior, highly expert roles.	A full-time Project Director with a formal governance structure and executive or Ministerial sponsorship.



## 5. Tailoring for Western Australia's unique context

A key strength of this framework is its explicit recognition of the unique factors that shape commissioning in Western Australia.

### Metropolitan vs. regional and remote commissioning

Commissioning in regional and remote WA is fundamentally different from commissioning in the Perth metropolitan area. The framework accounts for this through the **External Challenge** dimension. Factors that increase complexity and therefore resourcing needs in regional and remote settings include:

- **Thin markets:** There are often few or no suitable providers, requiring the government to invest efforts in market shaping and capacity building amongst existing providers.
- **Distance and logistics:** The time and cost associated with travel, engagement, and service oversight are significantly higher.
- **Infrastructure limitations:** Limited access to connectivity, housing, or other essential infrastructure can add another layer of complexity.

The framework ensures that a project in a remote region is appropriately assessed at a higher resourcing level, justifying the necessary upfront investment. Regional and remote commissioning will typically require longer timeframes than metropolitan services.

### Cultural Safety and Aboriginal Governance

For projects involving Aboriginal communities, cultural safety and Aboriginal governance are paramount. The framework ensures these considerations are woven throughout the commissioning lifecycle. This requires specific investment in:

- **Culturally safe co-design:** Working genuinely with Aboriginal communities, ACCOs and Aboriginal Businesses to ensure services are designed by and for the communities they are intended to serve.
- **Culturally specific roles:** Allocating resources for roles such as Cultural Liaison Officers and Community Engagement Leads throughout the project.
- **Longer timeframes:** Recognising that building trust and establishing effective partnerships takes time and cannot be rushed.
- **Resourcing for transition and contracting:** Additional effort and time is required to support culturally safe transition into new or redesigned services, including onboarding ACCOs and ensuring processes support ACCO participation in the commissioning process.

## 6. Demonstrating value: The return on investment (ROI) of commissioning

When presenting a business case to the Department of Treasury and Finance, it is essential to demonstrate value for money. This framework provides a robust way to articulate the **Return on Investment (ROI) of the commissioning resources themselves**.

The core argument is that investing appropriately in the commissioning process, that is, the people, skills, and time dedicated to planning and design is a critical driver of long-term project success and value. A higher upfront investment in commissioning effort is not simply an administrative cost; it is a strategic investment to mitigate risk and maximise outcomes.

This framework helps agencies explain to the Department of Treasury and Finance how this investment generates returns by:

- **Reducing the risk of failure:** Thorough needs analysis and co-design in the initial stages significantly reduce the risk of designing the wrong service, leading to costly failures or rework down the line.
- **Improving service outcomes:** A well-designed, evidence-informed service model is far more likely to achieve its intended social and economic outcomes, delivering greater value to the community.
- **Achieving greater efficiency:** Proactive market engagement, market shaping and collaborative procurement strategies can lead to more effective and sustainable contracts, ensuring better value from the overall service budget.
- **Building stronger partnerships:** Investing in genuine engagement and relationship management leads to more effective partnerships with providers and the community, which is essential for successful delivery.

The framework allows agencies to make a compelling case that spending more on commissioning resources for complex projects is a sensible investment that protects the much larger, multi-year investment in the service itself and delivers a better outcome for the state.

### Assessing the return on investment

A powerful way to conceptualise the ROI is to evaluate the relationship between the **commissioning input** and the **value achieved** by the service that is delivered.

- **Commissioning input:** This is the scale and appropriateness of the resourcing allocated to the commissioning process, as determined by this framework. A 'High' complexity project requires a significant input of expert skills, time, and budget to plan and design effectively.
- **Value Achieved:** This is the net benefit the service delivers to the community. It can be understood through the following relationship:
  1. **Outcomes:** This refers to the positive changes and results experienced by the service users and the broader community. It answers the question: *What did we achieve?* High-quality commissioning, particularly in the initial stages of the commissioning cycle, ensures that the service is focused on achieving the right outcomes those that genuinely address the identified needs.



2. **Cost:** This is the total cost of delivering the service over its lifecycle. It answers the question: *What did it cost to deliver?* Effective commissioning helps to ensure that the service is delivered efficiently and sustainably, maximising the outcomes achieved for every dollar spent.
3. **Equity:** This is a critical multiplier that assesses how fairly the outcomes were distributed across the target population, particularly for priority or vulnerable groups. It answers the question: *Who benefited, and did we address disadvantage?* A strong focus on equity during commissioning, through cultural safety, ensures that services do not just achieve good outcomes on average, but that they work for those who need them most.

By using this framework, agencies can demonstrate that a higher **commissioning effort** for complex projects is a deliberate investment that delivers **better use of public resources** and **greater value for money**. It makes clear that well-resourced commissioning directly supports better outcomes, greater efficiency, and more equitable services for Western Australia.



## 7. Conclusion

### Increasing consistency and rigour

This Commissioning Resourcing Map represents a step forward in maturing WA's approach to commissioning. It addresses the challenge of planning and budgeting uncertainty, and the risk of under-resourcing complex and critical community initiatives. By introducing a common approach built around the core dimensions of **External Challenge** and **Design Complexity**, the framework provides a shared basis for understanding and responding to commissioning complexity with appropriate resourcing. It moves agencies away from ad-hoc planning towards a more structured approach to aligning investment with effort.

### Empowering agencies and building capability

For line agencies, this framework equips them to articulate the nuances of their work, build compelling business cases that justify the necessary upfront investment in commissioning resources. For central agencies, it provides a consistent lens through which to view proposals, enabling fairer comparisons and more strategic investment decisions. This framework assists in ensuring that the right skills are in place at the right time in the commissioning cycle.

### Delivering better outcomes for Western Australia

The value of this framework will be measured by its impact on the ground. By ensuring that commissioning projects are set up for success with the right people, skills, and budget, it contributes to the delivery of higher-quality services for the people of Western Australia. It reinforces the critical link between thoughtful, well-resourced commissioning and the achievement of better outcomes for the community.

### Building a learning system for the future

Crucially, this framework is not static. The 'Evaluate & Learn' stage, combined with the ROI assessment, creates a vital continuous improvement loop. By systematically capturing data on both the **commissioning inputs** (the resources allocated) and the **service value achieved** (the outcomes, cost, and equity), the public sector can begin to build a rich evidence base. This creates a long-term 'learning system' that will allow an understanding, with increasing sophistication, of what works. This will assist in advancing the practice of commissioning in Western Australia and ensuring public investment is directed to meet the evolving needs of the state.

## Appendix A: How to assess your commissioning project's complexity

This guide is designed to help commissioning practitioners determine where their commissioning project sits on the **Low**, **Medium**, and **High** categories for the two key dimensions: **External Challenge** and **Design Complexity**.

Use the descriptions below as a decision-making tool to assess the attributes of your initiative.

### Dimension 1: External Challenge

This dimension assesses the context in which you are operating. Consider the following attributes to determine if your project's External Challenge is Low, Medium, or High.

#### A project with a **LOW** External Challenge typically features:

- **Population needs:** A well-defined and homogenous target population with well-understood, stable needs.
- **Service user needs:** Service users have low levels of vulnerability and present with straightforward, predictable needs.
- **Market conditions:** A mature, stable, and competitive market with multiple suitable providers (e.g., metropolitan area). The market is easy to engage.
- **Geography and logistics:** The project will be delivered in a single, easily accessible metropolitan or major regional centre. Travel and logistical requirements are minimal.
- **Stakeholder complexity:** A small number of easily identifiable stakeholders who are aligned and supportive. Engagement requirements are straightforward.
- **Cultural governance:** Cultural protocols are known, established, and straightforward to follow, with strong existing relationships with Aboriginal communities and ACCOs.

#### A project with a **MEDIUM** External Challenge typically features:

- **Population needs:** A diverse target population with varying needs, some of which may be complex or not fully understood. There may be some urgency to address needs.
- **Service user needs:** Some service users have moderate levels of vulnerability or complexity, requiring additional support or coordination.
- **Market conditions:** A mixed or developing market with a limited number of suitable providers, or a market with some stability issues. Some effort may be required to stimulate market interest.
- **Geography and logistics:** The project spans multiple locations, including some regional areas, requiring planned travel and coordination.



- **Stakeholder complexity:** Multiple stakeholders with differing views or priorities that require active management and facilitation. May involve cross-agency collaboration.
- **Cultural governance:** Some cultural governance requirements, including engagement with local Aboriginal Elders or ACCOs, and the need to follow specific cultural protocols and decision-making processes.

**A project with a HIGH External Challenge typically features:**

- **Population needs:** A highly diverse, dispersed, or vulnerable population with severe, complex, and urgent needs that are poorly understood or of high-risk.
- **Service user needs:** Service users experience high levels of vulnerability, risk, or complexity, often requiring intensive, specialised, or multi-agency support.
- **Market conditions:** A "thin" or non-existent market with very few or no suitable providers (e.g., remote Western Australia). Requires proactive market development, stewardship, and capacity building.
- **Geography and logistics:** The services will be delivered in remote or multiple hard-to-reach locations, demanding significant budget and time for travel and complex logistical arrangements.
- **Stakeholder complexity:** A large and diverse group of stakeholders with conflicting interests, historical tensions, or complex cultural governance requirements (e.g., Aboriginal communities). Requires intensive and strongly coordinated engagement.
- **Cultural governance:** Complex cultural governance arrangements involving multiple Aboriginal communities, Elders, or ACCOs, with strong expectations around self-determination, cultural protocols, and shared decision-making that require intensive, ongoing engagement.

## Dimension 2: Design Complexity

This dimension assesses the choices you make about the project's scale, scope, and novelty. Consider the following attributes to determine if your project's Design Complexity is Low, Medium, or High.

### A project with **LOW** Design Complexity typically features:

- **Scale of investment:** A small investment and/or a short project duration (e.g., under 12 months), which limits the range of feasible commissioning options.
- **Scope of change:** A continuation or minor refinement of an existing service or contract. The impact of the change is minimal and contained within a single business unit.
- **Level of innovation:** Uses established, well-understood service models and procurement processes. There is little to no innovation required.
- **Extent of co-design:** Requires minimal stakeholder consultation. The service model is pre-determined and understood.
- **Number of service providers and contracts:** A small number of providers and simple contract structures that require minimal coordination.
- **Place-based variation requirements:** Little or no need to tailor service models or agreements for different communities or locations.
- **Age and condition of existing contracts:** Contracts are up-to-date, stable, and closely aligned to current policy or service practice.
- **System complexity:** The service operates within a simple, well-defined system with clear pathways and limited interdependencies.

### A project with **MEDIUM** Design Complexity typically features:

- **Scale of investment:** A moderate investment and/or a multi-year project duration.
- **Scope of change:** An enhancement or expansion of an existing service, or the development of a new service that impacts multiple business units or requires integration with other services.
- **Level of innovation:** Involves adapting existing service models for a new context or introducing some new elements or technologies. Procurement may involve a multi-stage process.
- **Extent of co-design:** Requires a structured co-design process with a defined group of stakeholders to refine the service model.
- **Number of service providers and contracts:** Several providers or a moderate number of contracts requiring planned coordination and performance management.
- **Place-based variation requirements:** Some tailoring of service models or agreements required to reflect regional or community needs.

- **Age and condition of existing contracts:** Contracts require moderate redesign to update outdated service models, KPIs, or commissioning approaches.
- **System complexity:** The service sits within a moderately complex system with multiple interdependencies or shared responsibilities across agencies or providers.

**A project with HIGH Design Complexity typically features:**

- **Scale of investment:** A major, long-term strategic investment for the government.
- **Scope of change:** A transformational, system-wide reform that impacts multiple agencies, sectors, and the community. It may involve significant policy or legislative change.
- **Level of innovation:** A first-of-its-kind initiative that involves developing and testing entirely new service models, funding mechanisms, or partnership structures. High degree of uncertainty and risk.
- **Extent of co-design:** Requires an intensive and emergent co-design process with a broad and diverse range of stakeholders, including those with lived experience, to define the problem and create the solution from the ground up.
- **Number of service providers or contracts:** Many providers or numerous complex contracts requiring significant design, integration, negotiation, and monitoring structures.
- **Place-based variation:** Extensive tailoring of service models and agreements required across diverse communities, including culturally governed and remote locations.
- **Age and condition of existing contracts:** Contracts are old, fragmented, or misaligned with current policy or standards, requiring full redevelopment.
- **System complexity:** The service operates within a complex, multi-agency system where pathways are fragmented and service disruption carries significant consequences (e.g., homelessness, high-risk accommodation).

## Summary grids for assessment

### Grid 1: External Challenge features

Feature	Low	Medium	High
<b>Population needs</b>	Homogenous population with stable characteristics.	Mixed or dispersed population with some variation in access or location.	Highly dispersed or rapidly changing population.
<b>Service user needs</b>	Needs are predictable and met through standard services.	Some complexity or vulnerability requiring additional support.	High vulnerability or complexity requiring multi-agency support.
<b>Market conditions</b>	Mature, stable, competitive market with a range of capable providers.	Developing or mixed market with limited provider choice.	Thin or non-existent market requiring active market development.
<b>Geography &amp; logistics</b>	Single, easily accessible metropolitan location with minimal logistics.	Multiple locations requiring some regional travel and coordination.	Remote locations requiring significant travel and logistical planning.
<b>Stakeholder complexity</b>	Small, aligned, and supportive stakeholder group.	Multiple stakeholders with differing priorities requiring management.	Large, diverse group with conflicting interests requiring governance.



## Grid 2: Design Complexity features

Feature	Low	Medium	High
<b>Scale of investment</b>	Small investment with a short duration (<12 months).	Moderate investment with a multi-year duration.	Major investment with a long-term, strategic duration.
<b>Scope of change</b>	Minor refinement to an existing service.	Enhancement or expansion of an existing service.	Transformational change involving system-wide reform.
<b>Level of innovation</b>	Established, well-understood service models.	Adapted models with some new or modified elements.	Novel, first-of-its-kind models testing entirely new approaches.
<b>Extent of co-design</b>	Minimal consultation with a small number of stakeholders.	Structured co-design involving defined stakeholder groups.	Intensive co-design involving diverse and emergent stakeholder input.
<b>Number of service providers or contracts</b>	Small number of providers and simple contract structures.	Several providers or moderate contract volume requiring coordination.	Many providers or numerous complex contracts requiring integration.
<b>Place-based variation</b>	Minimal or no place-based tailoring required.	Some tailoring for regional contexts or Aboriginal communities.	Extensive tailoring across diverse, remote, or Aboriginal communities.
<b>Age and condition of existing contracts</b>	Recent and stable contracts (0-3 years) requiring minimal uplift.	Contracts requiring moderate redesign to update services or KPIs (<5 years).	Legacy contracts (>10 years) requiring full redevelopment.
<b>System complexity</b>	Service operates in a simple system with clear roles and pathways.	Service sits in a connected system with some interdependencies.	Service exists in a multi-agency system with significant interdependencies.



## Appendix B: Exemplar of Commissioning Resourcing Matrix

Commissioning can be thought of as a continuum from **individual contracts** to **system reform**. The exemplar below for Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) gives agencies a framework to understand where their commissioning sits.

All commissioning levels require appropriate access to functional expertise (e.g., procurement, data and analytics, costing, etc.). These requirements scale in intensity with project complexity. The table below outlines the scope and resourcing profile for each level, noting that other factors contributing to complexity are covered in separate sections of the framework.

Resourcing level	Scope (example of what is being commissioned)	Description (Example of commissioning at this level)	Resource (example of the resourcing at this level)
Essential	<b>Single contract or Preferred Service Provider (PSP) variation:</b> Existing service with budget and specifications.	Department of Communities manages a <b>single FDV contract</b> (e.g. one provider, one contract in Albany).	<b>Individual officer / contract manager</b> with access to advice as needed (e.g. procurement, data).
Low-Moderate	<b>Portfolio of small number of contracts:</b> 2–3 contracts in the same service area and region.	Department of Communities manages <b>several FDV contracts</b> (e.g. FDV services in the South-West region).	<b>Small commissioning team</b> plus access to expert advice as needed (e.g. procurement, data).
Moderate	<b>Service-level:</b> Entire suite of contracts within a state-wide service area (e.g., all FDV services)	Department of Communities commissions a <b>suite of state-wide FDV services</b> (e.g. refugees, counselling, outreach).	<b>Dedicated service-level team</b> with a mix of generalist and increasingly expert roles.
Significant	<b>Joint commissioning:</b> Multiple agencies commissioning related services; multi-contract environment.	Department of Communities and Department of Justice <b>jointly commission FDV services</b> (e.g. FDV victim-survivor refuges, FDV offender rehabilitation).	<b>Joint leadership group</b> with experts in their fields and dedicated support (e.g. senior subject experts)
High	<b>System-reform:</b> Whole-of-sector redesign, major reform agenda	Family and Domestic Violence Taskforce (e.g. drives <b>System Reform Plan</b> across the FDV sector).	<b>Taskforce / reform office</b> with a large, dedicated, and highly expert team under senior leadership.

This table is illustrative and rather than exhaustive. Additional factors influencing resourcing requirements, including place-based variation, number of contracts, and cross-agency dependencies etc. are incorporated within the Commissioning Resource Matrix and complexity dimensions.



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