



Australian Government  
Department of the  
Prime Minister and Cabinet

# Guide to Implementation Planning



Cabinet Implementation Unit



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ISBN 978-1-922098-40-5 Guide to Implementation Planning (PDF)

ISBN 978-1-922098-41-2 Guide to Implementation Planning (RTF)

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# Introduction

*Implementation and delivery of Australian Government policy initiatives is one of the key responsibilities of government agencies. In recent years there has been an increasing focus on and a community expectation of, sound policy implementation and seamless delivery of government policies—on time, within budget and to an acceptable level of quality.*

*Better Practice Guide: Implementation of Programme and Policy Initiatives, October 2006*

This guide is designed to help departments and agencies formulate robust implementation plans that clearly articulate how new policies, programs, and services will be delivered on time, on budget and to expectations. It supports the Australian Government’s approach to strengthening Cabinet decision-making and improving program governance and implementation.

This guide aims to assist those involved in implementation planning to understand how they should formulate an implementation plan. It is not intended to be a mechanical guide on how to complete an implementation plan, because it is not possible to formulate an implementation plan using a mechanistic or template-driven approach. Nor is it intended to be used in isolation from other guidance: implementation planning requires a much deeper understanding of management approaches than can be conveyed in a single guidance document.

We recommend that, in addition to this introduction,

- senior responsible officers familiarise themselves, at a minimum, with section 2, ‘Governance’ and section 7, ‘Management strategy’
- plan owners and members of project teams familiarise themselves with all sections.

We encourage departments and agencies to refer to this guide while developing their implementation plans. A step-by-step approach is not essential to the planning process—planning is an iterative exercise, and multiple rounds are necessary. We encourage implementation planners to consult with the Cabinet Implementation Unit during the drafting process.

The [Better Practice Guide: Implementation of Programme and Policy Initiatives](#), the Cabinet Implementation Unit’s toolkit and the documents supporting the [Gateway Reviews Process](#) are also useful references.

We encourage departments and agencies to monitor the implementation planning website at [www.dpvc.gov.au/implementation](http://www.dpvc.gov.au/implementation) for updates.

## Implementation planning

Implementation planning is the process of determining how an initiative will be implemented and setting this out in sufficient detail to enable the Cabinet to make an informed judgment about whether to proceed in the light of the risks and requirements involved.

Implementation planning is critical to ensure outcomes are delivered on decisions made by government. The Australian Public Service (APS) successfully delivers thousands of initiatives every year. Many of these policies, programs and projects involve a high level of implementation risk, and thus require appropriate management discipline, including engagement with central agencies, to maximise the prospects of successful delivery.

While there are administrative as well as legislative (under the FMA Act) requirements for agencies to develop implementation plans as part of their new policy proposals, it should not be viewed as an onerous task. Rather, the plan is a useful tool that will assist agencies in successfully delivering the initiative.

Policy reform often involves major transformational change across multiple programs and services, and several agencies. The drivers for the change can be varied and powerful; they may be complex; and they may create ambiguity and uncertainty. Such changes can have radical impacts on the way departments and agencies do business.

Implementing change often requires teams of people with different skill sets to work together across normal functional boundaries within and between departments and agencies.

Experience shows that traditional departmental and agency structures and processes are sometimes ill-suited to cross-portfolio delivery—this is when a disciplined approach to implementation planning is crucial.

Implementation planning has a strong management focus that requires best practice approaches, skills and experience to be applied. Effective implementation planning requires a structured approach to thinking and communicating in seven areas:

1. Planning
2. Governance
3. Engaging stakeholders
4. Managing risk
5. Monitoring, review and evaluation
6. Resource management
7. Management strategy.

A structured approach will create a shared understanding among those who will drive the implementation process, from the most senior leaders to managers, and across boundaries between and within government agencies and non-APS bodies.

Implementation planning is *not* about ‘filling in an implementation plan template’: rather, the implementation plan should document the structured thinking and communication (through face-to-face workshops, discussions and conversations) that has occurred between key leaders, managers and project teams.

**A word of warning:** No matter how comprehensive the implementation plan is, successful implementation hinges on the development of strong working relationships and a shared commitment to collaboration and acting with integrity. Fostering a culture of collegiality, where there is a clear, common understanding of the outcomes sought, is essential for successful implementation.

## Implementation plans

An effective implementation plan should:

- clearly articulate what success looks like
- be succinct
- be free of jargon—that is, should be capable of being understood by non-expert users
- be based on sound program logic—present a clear line of sight from the Government’s objective through inputs and outputs to expected outcomes and benefits
- outline the assumptions made about the links in the delivery chain, and how the delivery chain and its supporting assumptions will be evaluated
- clearly outline timeframes and project phases, especially where there are interdependencies with other programs/measures or critical requirements, such as the passage of legislation or negotiations with the states and territories
- clearly articulate the decision pathways—the means to achieving the objectives of the initiative
- identify standards and quality controls to be used during implementation
- explicitly identify and address the implementation challenges and how change will be managed (including risks and issues)
- be precise about risks—their source, likelihood of occurrence, consequence and mitigation strategies.

Implementation plans lodged with the Cabinet Implementation Unit form the baseline information for ongoing monitoring of the delivery of initiatives and for informing the Prime Minister and Cabinet about their progress. This information is presented through the Cabinet Implementation Unit’s regular reporting processes.

## When is an implementation plan required?

All Cabinet submissions, memoranda and new policy proposals (NPPs) that have significant implementation risks or challenges are required to attach implementation plans.

As a guide, a Cabinet submission is likely to have significant implementation risks or challenges when it:

- addresses a strategic priority of the Government
- involves major or complex changes
- involves significant cross-agency or cross-jurisdictional issues
- is particularly sensitive (for example where the policy affects many stakeholders, has received or is likely to receive adverse media attention or is particularly risky)
- requires urgent implementation
- involves new or complex technology or service delivery arrangements, or
- has been developed over a very short period.

New policy proposals must be assessed using the [Risk Potential Assessment Tool \(RPAT\)](#). We recommend, as a matter of best practice, that submissions without an NPP also be assessed with the RPAT to better communicate to the Cabinet the level of implementation risks or challenges. A submission that has a medium risk rating will require an implementation plan to be attached. Moreover, central agencies may also require departments and agencies to attach implementation plans to submissions where proposals are deemed to have a higher level of risk than is shown by the risk assessment or have particular implementation challenges.

If central agencies determine that a submission has ‘significant implementation challenges’ and does not contain an implementation plan, Cabinet will not consider it unless the Cabinet Secretary provides written authority for an exception to be made.

## Getting started

Departments and agencies intending to put forward Cabinet submissions, memoranda or NPPs must consult early with the relevant policy area of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), the Gateway Unit in Finance ([gateway@finance.gov.au](mailto:gateway@finance.gov.au)) and the Cabinet Implementation Unit (CIU, [implementation@pmc.gov.au](mailto:implementation@pmc.gov.au)) to determine whether an implementation plan is likely to be required.

The CIU offers a range of resources that will assist with implementation planning; this includes broad guidance material, general case studies and contacts for people with implementation experience and expertise, as well as detailed examples and checklists.

To get started, a ‘plan for planning’ is required—in other words, a commitment of time and effort from the people who will be engaged in implementation planning. As a first step this might be as simple as a series of commitments in people’s calendars to get together to set direction. However, to develop a comprehensive implementation plan, the implementation planning process itself may need to be managed as a project that may run over several months.



Two key roles must be filled from day one:

- A senior responsible officer (SRO), who will lead and drive implementation planning and who most likely will be the person who is accountable for the success of a policy's implementation. Typically this will be an SES Level 3 officer with experience in implementation planning.
- A plan owner, who will plan and control the structured thinking and communication processes that will deliver the implementation plan. Typically this will be an SES Level 1 or 2 officer, who will be supported by a small team of management specialists. Once initial planning is complete, ownership of the plan would pass to the project manager.

It is vital that those in key roles have access to the specialised management skills and experience required for implementation planning. It is also critical that program or project teams are closely involved in the implementation planning process.

## Key terms

A few key terms used in this guide are listed here.

**Benefit**—the measurable improvement resulting from an outcome, which is perceived as an advantage by one or more stakeholders. Note that not all outcomes will be perceived as positive, and outcomes that are positive for some stakeholders will be negative for others.

**Governance structure**—the management bodies (groups, boards and committees) and individual roles that will lead, plan and manage implementation. The structure should include clearly defined responsibilities, lines of accountability and reporting.

**Management strategy**—the approaches, methodologies and frameworks applied by an agency to plan and control the implementation of initiatives for which it is responsible, in this context new policy proposals.

**Program**—a temporary flexible structure created to coordinate, direct and oversee the implementation of an initiative.

**Initiative**—a set of projects and activities that deliver outcomes and benefits related to strategic policy objectives.

**Monitoring**—the continuous assessment of the progress of delivery to ensure implementation stays on track and to take necessary decisions to improve performance. It is a routine, ongoing, internal activity as opposed to a *review* or *evaluation*.

**Review**—the periodic or ad hoc assessment of the performance of an initiative, which generally does not apply the more rigorous process of evaluation. Reviews tend to focus on operational issues and are fundamental to sound governance and quality management.

**Evaluation**—a systematic and objective assessment to determine the extent to which intended and unintended policy outcomes are achieved, and how they have affected stakeholders. Evaluation, particularly independent evaluation, assesses how well the outcomes of an initiative meet its original objectives. It focuses on expected and achieved objectives, examining the outputs, processes and contextual factors, to shed light on achievements or the lack thereof. It aims to identify the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the intervention.

The definitions provided in this guide are consistent with the material published by the UK Government in support of its best practice frameworks, including the Office of Government Commerce [Glossary of Terms and Definitions](#), Managing Successful Programmes ([MSP](#)<sup>®</sup>) and the Portfolio, Programme and Project Management Maturity Model ([P3M3](#)<sup>™</sup>). They are not identical to those in the UK glossary because they have been tailored to suit the Australian Government's policy implementation environment.

## Example of a complex proposal

Each section of this guide concludes with an example of a complex proposal (by the fictional Department of Rural Affairs), designed to guide readers in understanding the issues that may need to be considered in the development of an implementation plan.

### **Rural Industries International Expo—context**

The Department of Rural Affairs is seeking funding for an international exposition to highlight Australia's rural industries and to develop a new package of policies to support rural industries.

The Department of Rural Affairs considers that the international exposition will highlight the significant achievements of Australia's rural industries to date, increase Australian exports and promote rural Australia as an attractive location for future investment.

The Department of Rural Affairs proposes that the international exposition will take place in two years to coincide with the launch of a new set of policies designed to further strengthen Australia's rural industries. Departments with policy responsibility for rural industries, including agriculture, fisheries, mining, renewable energy and tourism, will be asked to work collaboratively to develop this new package of policies.

The Department of Rural Affairs proposes that this international exposition be co-funded by the state government that hosts the event and by industry. Funding arrangements are yet to be negotiated, although the Commonwealth's commitment will be no more than 40 per cent of the total cost.

# 1 Planning

Planning is the process of identifying key steps needed to reach a policy outcome. It provides a structured approach or path for how an initiative will be implemented. It addresses key tasks, roles, responsibilities and timelines. Planning must commence early and all those involved in implementation of the policy must also be involved in planning. Without a plan, implementation is likely to fail.

## 1.1 Defining the end goal

A clearly articulated goal is vital to the buy-in, motivation and alignment of effort of the people involved in any policy implementation.

Defining the end goal is the same as defining what success looks like.

When departments and agencies need to implement policy, stakeholders will not necessarily understand the big picture. At the outset, the implementation plan should describe what successful implementation will look like, to make the policy intent clear.

The introduction to your implementation plan should:

- describe the policy objective—what are the outcomes being sought?
- describe the policy context, including the underlying need or problem
- describe the delivery model or strategy for achieving the policy objective—this may be a brief statement of how the outputs will be delivered, and how they will achieve the end goal
- be easily understood by a wide range of stakeholders
- have the broadest grouping of stakeholders as the target audience.

**Note for cross-portfolio policies:** When multiple departments and agencies are involved in implementing an initiative, the planning section of the implementation plan must clearly show which departments and agencies are responsible for the various aspects of the initiative. All departments and agencies involved in either the policy or delivery must agree on how success will be measured; all these departments and agencies must be consulted in the drafting of the implementation plan.

## 1.2 Benefits

A *benefit* is 'the measurable improvement resulting from an outcome which is perceived as an advantage by one or more stakeholders, which contributes towards one or more organisational objectives' (UK Cabinet Office 2011: 75).

Each implementation plan should contain a statement that defines and describes benefits—known as the benefits statement—so that all those working on the plan understand them.

A good benefits statement will describe:

- the intended beneficiaries for each policy objective as accurately as possible (noting any assumptions, constraints or exclusions)
- the benefits expected to be realised by specific deliverables:
  - *direct benefits* accrue to the intended beneficiaries of the initiative, such as the unemployed, small to medium-sized businesses, or a particular environmental sector
  - *indirect benefits* (or externalities) accrue to other beneficiaries, such as a specific community or society more broadly—if the indirect benefits are an important part of the policy objective then they should be included in the benefits statement
- how the benefits realised will be monitored and how they will be delivered.

Benefits should be specific, measurable, relevant to the objectives of the initiative, achievable within the timeframe and agreed by all implementing parties. Performance measures agreed for the initiative would assist in assessing the level of success in achieving these benefits.

### 1.3 Deliverables

A *deliverable* is a measurable, tangible or verifiable output.

In the implementation plan, each deliverable must be linked to specific project milestones. A milestone is a checkpoint along the delivery path that indicates if the initiative is on track to successful implementation.

The plan should explain which activities will be undertaken to deliver the project (that is, are in scope), and which activities are out of scope, as well as any related activities (see Table 1). Any activities that are the responsibility of other parts of the agency or external agencies should be identified. This is an important opportunity to establish expectations on who is doing what from the outset of the project.

Descriptions such as ‘establishing a section’ or ‘having a meeting with the states and territories’ are generally insufficient indicators of progress as they say little about whether the completion of these activities contributes to the overall policy being implemented.

**Table 1: Example table for mapping scope**

In scope		Responsible manager and agency	Out of scope
Activity	Deliverable(s)		Activity

## 1.4 Implementation schedule

An implementation schedule clearly outlines what the project will be delivering and when. It sets the framework for dealing with the 'on time' part of the objective 'on time, on budget and to expectations'.

The implementation schedule defines the major phases of work that will be undertaken to achieve the end goal. It documents a logical sequence of events over time to advance the policy from concept to delivery. It provides a foundation for the remainder of the implementation plan.

For most policy implementation, major phases of work may overlap, whether they run concurrently or sequentially. Identifying interrelationships and interdependencies between activities and phases is an important task for the planners. For example, development of performance measures and an evaluation strategy should proceed concurrently with other initial work since different skills, and therefore people, are likely to be required. On the other hand, getting guidelines or eligibility criteria approved may depend on completion of an extensive consultation phase.

Project phasing is an important way of dealing with uncertainties. For example, it is a fact of public sector life that systems development will often have to proceed, to allow detailed business specifications to be developed, before all the policy issues are sufficiently nailed down.

Such issues need to be articulated in the implementation schedule and in the risk section of the plan, particularly in identifying issues that are unresolved at the time the initial implementation plan is developed. The plan needs to identify how these issues will be resolved, when and by whom.

The implementation schedule should provide the following information in a clear, easy-to-read format:

- project phases and timelines (note that the implementation plan does not require a detailed timeline—an 'at-a-glance' timeline that provides a summary of key milestones and decision points would be more useful)
- the deliverables associated with each phase
- the major activities for each deliverable
- key milestones
- who is responsible for the delivery of each major activity
- any interdependencies.

Portfolio business and program delivery managers must check the implementation schedule to ensure that targets are achievable and appropriate.

**Note for cross-portfolio policies:** An overarching implementation schedule, which integrates the key activities of all the participating departments and agencies and their sequence, together with any interdependencies, is a minimum requirement of cross-portfolio implementation plans. Typically, this is the document against which progress will be monitored and assessed for reporting through the Cabinet Implementation Unit.

### **Rural Industries International Expo—planning**

In planning for the Rural Industries International Expo proposal, key issues to consider include:

- What outcomes are the expo and the new package of policies trying to achieve? What does successful implementation look like?
- What are the benefits of the proposal? How will those benefits be realised? To whom will the benefits flow—rural industries, government, the Australian population?
- What is the path to the end goal? What is needed to achieve the goal? What will the states contribute and what will the Commonwealth contribute?
- Who needs to be involved in the planning? Are all states going to be involved? Will all stakeholders be involved from the beginning and what will their roles be?
- Are there any activities associated with the expo that are out of scope? How will these activities be actioned?
- What are the key milestones for the project? What are the timelines for the development, approval and launch of the new policy package? How will these link to the launch of the expo? What are the key dates and timelines for the proposal?
- Are arrangements for other aspects of implementation addressed in the implementation plan—governance; management strategy; resource management; risk; stakeholder engagement and communication; and monitoring, review and evaluation?

## 2 Governance

### 2.1 Key considerations

Effective governance arrangements are critical to successful delivery. They should be one of the earliest considerations in planning for a new initiative.

Existing 'business-as-usual' agency management arrangements are often inadequate to govern the implementation of a new initiative, because implementation usually requires teams of people with different skills working across normal functional boundaries both within and between agencies. In addition, existing arrangements may not offer the speed and flexibility required when fast escalation and resolution of issues, risks and disputes may be needed. Finally, the governance structures will strongly influence the management strategy selected for implementation. It is important to ensure that all project officers and decision-makers, especially those involved in cross-portfolio projects, clearly understand both horizontal (to the project) and vertical (to their agency and Minister) lines of accountability.

Governance arrangements should be designed in parallel with other early planning activities, such as the development of the initial risk assessment, stakeholder analysis and key task timelines. Governance arrangements need to be developed collaboratively and agreed with all key stakeholders. This ensures that the governance structure is adapted to meet the demands of the initiative.

An effective governance structure requires strong leadership. The senior executive in all agencies with a policy or delivery interest must agree on the end goal for the initiative and demonstrate a shared commitment to the agreed governance arrangements. A lack of support at the top can undermine the agreed governance arrangements and lead to an informal, undocumented arrangement occurring in practice.

Governance arrangements should be regularly reviewed and adjusted throughout the life of the initiative. Regular reviews should be scheduled for key points in the initiative. Reviews should also be considered when there is a change in key personnel.

### 2.2 Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of each person or group involved in the initiative need to be clearly defined, agreed and documented. Taking the time to discuss the proposed roles and responsibilities of each person and group involved in the project can help to build consensus and understanding about the challenges and opportunities posed by the initiative.

Reporting arrangements should be defined at the outset. They should cover the content and frequency of regular reports and how to deal with emerging issues or risks that arise outside the regular reporting cycle.



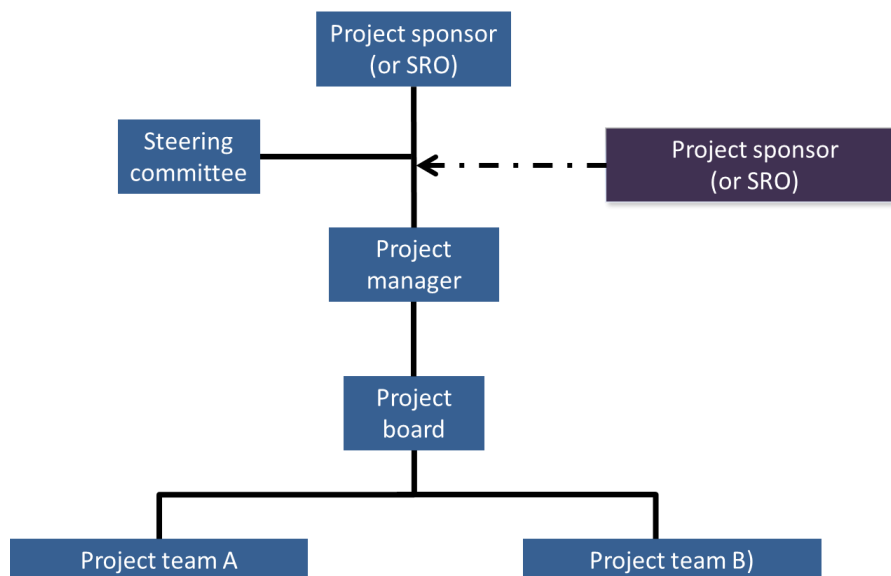
Typical structures and roles include:

- the project sponsor or the senior responsible officer (SRO)—the SRO plays a crucial role in the successful delivery of the initiative, and it is vital that they have sufficient expertise, independence and time to commit to the project and actively manage its implementation. Names, positions and contact details must be supplied in the implementation plan.
- the sponsoring group/steering committee—the driving force behind the initiative that provides the investment decision and top-level endorsement for the direction and objectives of the initiative
- the project board(s)—an executive-level management group, which is represented by all of the interested parties in an organisation, including any suppliers (internal and external) who have been identified. If a project board is used, a list of group members must be supplied in the implementation plan.
- the program or project manager(s) responsible for managing operations and the project team(s).

## 2.3 Documenting the governance arrangements

Governance arrangements should be documented in a diagram that shows the lines of decision-making responsibility, consultation channels and avenues for horizontal collaboration. An example of a governance structure diagram is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Example of a governance structure diagram**



The governance structure diagram should be accompanied by a description of the roles and responsibilities of each person or group depicted in the governance structure, as in the example in Table 2.

**Table 2: Example table showing description of roles and responsibilities of governance group members**

<b>Governance role</b>	<b>Key personnel</b>	<b>Accountable to</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Project sponsor (or SRO)	Deputy Secretary	Secretary of the lead agency and, through the Secretary, the Minister	Ultimate decision-making accountability
Steering committee	Chaired by the project manager (First Assistant Secretary), with representatives from all agencies with a delivery or policy interest in the project	Project sponsor	Provides advice to the project sponsor that takes into account the views of all relevant agencies and stakeholders through the stakeholder advisory group Considers the monthly risk and issues report provided by the project manager Meets monthly
Project manager	First Assistant Secretary from the lead agency	Steering committee	Coordinates delivery by the project teams Manages resources Approves the monthly risk and issues report Takes emerging issues and risks to the steering committee
Project board	Project manager Project team leaders	Project manager	Discusses upcoming work, emerging issues and risks, use of resources across the project and identifies interdependencies in a collaborative forum Meets weekly
Project teams	Project team leaders	Project manager	Lead delivery of each workstream
Stakeholder advisory forum (or group)	Stakeholder representatives from key industry and third sector groups	Steering committee	Consultative forum to advise the steering committee on emerging industry issues and to discuss the proposed approach to implementation of the project

Once the governance arrangements are agreed and documented, it is essential that they are circulated and explained to everyone involved in the project.

## 2.4 Cross-portfolio initiatives

Additional effort is required to design effective governance arrangements for cross-portfolio initiatives, or initiatives that involve delivery by one or more organisations outside of government. A tailored governance arrangement is required to facilitate horizontal collaboration across delivery partners and ensure a clear line of vertical accountability. The Cabinet Implementation Unit can advise on the governance structure that might be most appropriate for your initiative.

### **Rural Industries International Expo—governance**

In designing governance arrangements for the Rural Industries International Expo proposal, key issues to consider include:

- Who is the lead Minister for the proposal?
- Who in the Department of Rural Affairs needs to be involved in the preparations for the expo and the development of the new package of policies? Are these people already in a single group or do they cross multiple areas? If they are in multiple areas, how will their work be coordinated?
- Which other agencies need to be involved?
- Who will be the project sponsor? Are there resources to establish a dedicated team to manage the project? When will the project team be established?
- Is there an existing governance structure that could be leveraged for the project? How will the work of the different Commonwealth agencies developing policies be coordinated? Is an interdepartmental committee appropriate? What reporting arrangements will be put in place to ensure that any emerging issues in one agency are shared so that they do not affect work in another agency?
- Who will lead discussions with the states to identify the host state? How will responsibility and decision-making authority for organising the event be shared with the selected state, given its funding role?
- Who will lead the discussion with industry? What funding contribution is expected? How will responsibility and decision-making authority for the event be shared with industry?
- Who else (from the Commonwealth, other states and territories, or industry) needs to be consulted on the new policies and the event? Should a formal advisory group be established?

## 3 Engaging stakeholders

### 3.1 Effective stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement ‘is the process used by an organisation to engage relevant stakeholders for a clear purpose to achieve accepted outcomes’ (AccountAbility 2011: 6). It can provide useful information to shape the implementation of the initiative at policy, program or project level.

The key elements of effective engagement include:

- involving the right stakeholders
- ensuring a fit-for-purpose approach, with well-managed interactions
- managing expectations
- using the information obtained from stakeholders.

### 3.2 Communication and engagement

The terms *communication* and *engagement* are not interchangeable, though they are inherently linked. Communication usually involves a one-way flow of information (whether by speaking, writing or other means), whereas engagement is about working with and involving stakeholders for a clear purpose—usually a two-way flow of information. There are different skills, tools and techniques for communication and engagement, and engaging with stakeholders will usually require a mix of both.

### 3.3 Stakeholders—who are they?

Stakeholders are ‘those individuals, groups of individuals or organisations that affect and/or could be affected by an organisation’s activities, products or services’ (AccountAbility 2011: 6). Stakeholders may include government agencies (federal, state and territory); APS staff; not-for-profit organisations; private sector organisations and businesses; representative, professional and peak bodies; educational institutions; international governments and organisations; individuals; communities; and the media. They may also include those to whom the APS is accountable, such as Ministers and the Parliament.

Stakeholders are not homogeneous—they have differing influences, interests, objectives, opinions, capacities and capabilities in engaging with government. They will also have different types of relationships with government—for example, some require light-touch engagement, others are partners in delivery; some may be one-off engagements, others are long-term relationships.

### 3.4 Key considerations

When planning stakeholder engagement it is important that the purpose of the engagement is clear and reflects the objectives of the initiative.

To ensure there is a good understanding of the stakeholder environment it is useful to map:

- who the key stakeholders are
- their interests and influence in the project
- their capacity to engage
- the level of involvement required of them (for example, whether they are to be informed, consulted, collaborated with, and/or partners in delivery).

Stakeholders can be engaged throughout the policy life cycle, including during the development of the policy, as well as the implementation, delivery and review stages. It is important to consider how feedback from stakeholders will be incorporated to effectively manage stakeholder expectations before, during and after engagement. The implementation plan should clearly outline the most appropriate times to engage stakeholders and how their expectations will be managed to support the delivery of the initiative.

You will need to tailor your stakeholder engagement approach to your initiative by using a mix of methods that reflect the purpose of the engagement and the nature of the stakeholders. Where possible, you should try to identify the capacities and capabilities that already exist within government to deliver the stakeholder engagement approach, including whether you can harness expertise from other agencies that have recent experience in undertaking similar engagement activities.

Some other key things to consider when planning stakeholder engagement include:

- How does it interact with the rest of the project and how will it influence decisions?
- How will stakeholder risks affect delivery?
- How will other risks affect engaging with stakeholders?
- How will stakeholder engagement activities be monitored, reviewed and evaluated?

### **Rural Industries International Expo—engaging stakeholders**

In designing a stakeholder engagement approach for the Rural Industries International Expo proposal, key issues to consider include:

- What will be the role of each stakeholder? Will they be delivery partners in hosting the expo, contribute to and promote it, provide expert advice on the development of rural policies, test the implementation of policy ideas?
- Who are the right stakeholders? This will depend on the role they will play in the expo and in policy development. It would be useful to develop a stakeholder map for the policy development stage and another one for the expo.
- What are the appropriate methods to engage stakeholders? These could include using print media, websites and newsletters to communicate information about the expo; holding public meetings with stakeholders on what the expo should include; or establishing a joint industry–government advisory committee to oversee the delivery of the expo.

## 4 Managing risk

### 4.1 Key considerations

Successful implementation requires managers to plan for and deal with uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Understanding the potential problems that may arise during implementation will allow agencies to reduce the likelihood of these occurring and, if necessary, have in place strategies to manage them and reduce their impact. Risk management is an essential part of implementation planning, and provides a structured way to identify, mitigate, accept and assign responsibility to the risks that might affect successful implementation.

From 8 August 2011, agencies have been required to complete a [Risk Potential Assessment Tool \(RPAT\)](#) for every NPP. This is the RPAT self-assessment stage. The overall risk rating derived from the RPAT and the top five risks must be included in the NPP. PM&C, Cabinet Secretariat will not process submissions where this information is not provided in the NPP.

A *risk* is an uncertain event or set of events which, should they occur, will have an effect on the achievement of objectives. These effects might not always be detrimental. A risk can be either a threat (that is, an uncertain event that could have a negative impact on objectives or benefits) or an opportunity (that is, an uncertain event that could have a favourable impact on objectives or benefits).

*Issues* arise from events that have already happened, were not planned, are currently affecting the program and need to be actively dealt with and resolved. Risks, should they occur, become issues.

Good risk management ensures that decision-makers are able to make accurate and well-informed judgments. It also helps to maintain alignment between ministerial expectations and progress at the project level. By understanding the potential risks that may affect the implementation of a policy measure, departments and agencies can reduce the likelihood or consequence of unpleasant surprises that may jeopardise the achievement of policy objectives.

Most departments and agencies have their own risk management framework in place. Where this is the case, the framework should comply with ISO 31000:2009. It can underpin the risk management element of implementation planning to inform the overall risk rating derived from the RPAT. The RPAT and instructions for its use can be found on the [Finance website](#).

### 4.2 Risk identification

Risks may arise as a consequence of:

- the delivery method chosen (transmitted risk)
- changing circumstances and new developments
- further refinement of project planning
- changes to the scope of the project
- discussions or negotiations with stakeholders.

Any current issues and any known constraints, assumptions or conflicts that may affect the program should also be identified.

Departments and agencies should ensure that risks to achieving the desired policy outcome as well as risks to the successful implementation of the initiative are identified separately. This point links back to the two elements of success to be evaluated in the plan: the success of the implementation process; and the success of the overall measure in terms of the outcomes or impacts aimed for.

During implementation planning, risks should be identified through:

- stakeholder consultation
- review of previous and current related projects
- the application of professional knowledge in project-based management
- consultation with specialist technical advisers, as needed
- dedicated risk workshops
- review of known risks and issues.

### 4.3 Risk planning

The design and implementation of the risk management plan will be influenced by the objectives of the initiative and the governance arrangements for the project. There may be differing levels of rigour with which departments and agencies undertake risk assessment and mitigation strategies to manage risk. All risk assessment processes, however, should:

- adopt a comprehensive and realistic analysis of risks (remember that risk planning is about taking action to *prevent* the risks that can be avoided and *minimise* the ones that cannot be)
- consider risks to achieving desired policy outcomes/impacts as well as risks to successful implementation of the project (this will assist in assessing success during evaluation)
- identify and list the risks, and for each, detail its risk rating, current controls and treatments, as well as the residual risk rating after the treatments are applied
- consider in detail and record the treatment(s) to be applied to mitigate each identified risk (for example, 'stakeholder consultation' as a treatment statement is inadequate; the treatment statement should provide details of who will be consulted, on what, when and how)
- outline a schedule for regular and ongoing reviews
- identify who is accountable for monitoring, reporting and undertaking mitigation action for each identified risk
- identify who is responsible for reviewing and updating the risk management plan on a regular basis and the process for this review
- for cross-portfolio measures, outline arrangements for taking a 'whole-of-package' consideration of assessment, management and review of risks.

### **Rural Industries International Expo—managing risk**

In designing the risk management and mitigation plan for the Rural Industries International Expo proposal, key issues to consider include:

- Does the Department of Rural Affairs have a risk management methodology that can be usefully applied to assess the expo proposal? Does the methodology need any modifications to make it suitable for the project? Is a risk management template available?
- Which stakeholders (internal as well as external) need to be involved in the risk management planning exercise?
- Have all potential risks to the program, both arising from within the Department of Rural Affairs and externally, been identified?
- Does the risk management and mitigation plan provide adequate details on the nature of the risk, the current rating and controls, the mitigation actions, residual risk rating and risk owners?
- How often will the risk management and mitigation plan be reviewed? Who will be responsible for this review and what are the reporting arrangements?
- Did all the risk owners participate in the planning exercise and are they aware of their responsibilities in relation to risk management?



## 5 Monitoring, review and evaluation

### 5.1 Key considerations

The activities of review, monitoring and evaluation have three main purposes: to guide decision-making, to improve the delivery of the initiative and to enhance accountability.

An effective monitoring, review and evaluation regime will depend on a number of key factors: proper planning, understanding of the purpose, timing and mechanisms of the evaluation, and the application of the findings.

Evaluations answer three key questions:

- *Are we doing the right thing?*—this addresses the rationale, the delivery process in the context of the real world and the outcomes for intended beneficiaries.
- *Are we doing it the right way?*—this addresses all the components of how expected outcomes are being achieved.
- *Are there better ways of achieving the results?*—this addresses good practices, lessons learned and possible alternative options.

Good planning is the most successful strategy for delivering an effective evaluation that will usefully answer these three questions based on a robust foundation of review and monitoring.

Understanding the policy context and objectives of the initiative is essential to defining why an evaluation is needed, how it will be used and by whom.

Depending on its purpose, an evaluation may be conducted before, during or after implementation. If undertaken before implementation, this is generally for the purpose of assisting in defining the extent and focus of service needs or for establishing benchmarking for future comparable measurement. Assessments (possibly in the form of a review) undertaken at different stages over the life of the initiative measure progress towards achieving expected outcomes and identify possible improvements required to micro-level delivery mechanisms. Evaluations completed following implementation assess the impact of the initiative and must be timed to ensure the full effects of the initiative can be captured.

Looking at the critical milestones and delivery phases of an initiative may usefully inform the timing of monitoring, review and evaluation.

The type of evaluation is largely determined by the nature of the initiative itself and how the findings of the evaluation will be applied. In deciding on the design, approach and methodology of the evaluation, consider:

- Which information, data collection and [evaluation methodology](#) will provide the evidence base to best inform the decision-makers?
- Which methods and data will produce the most robust and credible evidence base within given timeframes and the resources available?

Good indicators are succinct measures that aid understanding of the initiative and make comparisons and improvements possible. If meaningful indicators are not selected, no amount of

data will provide useful insights about or evidence for the performance of an initiative. Likewise, meaningful indicators without meaningful data will not be useful.

Responsibility for conducting the evaluation and acting on its findings and recommendations needs to be identified during planning. Forecasts for adequate resourcing of monitoring, review and evaluation also need to be completed in the planning phase. Funding must take into account the full costs to the affected agencies, jurisdictions, third party contractors and funding recipients. The availability of resources and capacity will determine whether the evaluation is conducted internally or externally.

How and to whom the evaluation report will be released will be informed by the purpose of the evaluation and how the results are intended to be used. Reviews and monitoring reports should also be considered in this context.

Reporting the results of an evaluation is not an end in itself. The findings need to be applied so that the original purpose of the evaluation is achieved. This may mean the findings and recommendations need to be tailored for specific audiences.

### **Rural Industries International Expo—monitoring, review and evaluation**

In designing monitoring, review and evaluation arrangements for the Rural Industries International Expo proposal, key issues to consider include:

- What will success look like? How will it be measured? How will it be reported? Who will it be reported to? When will it be reported? What authority is required to ensure monitoring, review and evaluation activities proceed as planned?
- What baseline data needs to be collected on the performance of rural industries to date, exports and the current status of domestic and international investment? When will comparison data be collected—directly after the Expo, after six months, after one year, prior to the next international exposition if another is held? Will connections made during the expo be documented through case studies so that some qualitative data will accompany the quantitative data?
- What indicators will be chosen to monitor changes in performance directly due to the impact of the expo (that is, attribution)? Are there existing datasets that can be drawn on, or does a new framework need to be established? Has a reporting framework been agreed? Over what period are the benefits expected to be realised? Has an evaluation strategy been agreed? Is there an expert group available for guidance?
- Who will be responsible for collecting the baseline and ongoing data? Who will be responsible for coordinating data collection? How will consistency be maintained across the collection? What resources (including funding) are available for the data collection, reporting and evaluation activities? Does funding for this need to be included in the NPP?
- Are all stakeholders—interdepartmental, inter-jurisdictional and industry—aware that data collection and reporting of the data are part of implementation? Will there be a cost to state government or industry for participating in monitoring, review and evaluation activities? If so, will this be addressed in funding negotiations?

## 6 Resource management

### 6.1 Key considerations

Resource management involves consideration of the types—financial and non-financial—and amounts of resources required and how they will be used to deliver the stated outcomes of an initiative.

The resources available to implement an initiative will be limited and their availability will change throughout its life. It is essential that project managers understand the quantum of resources available and how important their efficient deployment in the delivery of the initiative is.

Good resource management will ensure:

- more informed decisions that match the availability of resources
- more efficient, effective, ethical and economical use of available resources
- improved delivery, as initiatives are less likely to be delayed by resource shortages
- improved realisation of benefits, as the scale and timing of implementation is proactively managed.

The implementation plan should address financial resources, including budget, and non-financial resources, including required assets (for example, office space and equipment), technology and human resources.

### 6.2 Business case

A business case outlines the optimum mix of information used to judge whether an initiative is needed, viable and achievable, and therefore worthwhile investing in. The business case should not only be used to gain initial funding for an initiative, but should be actively maintained throughout the life of the initiative and be continually updated with information about costs, benefits and risks.

The business case should provide information on the estimated costs, timescales and effort required to set up and manage the initiative from commencement through to delivery and realisation of benefits. Options for delivery, clearly explaining the differing risk and cost profiles and benefits, should be part of the business case.

When making resourcing decisions, it is important to understand what benefits can be gained, with what degree of risk and how much they will cost. The key categories of benefits and costs are the service being delivered, the relationships required to manage service delivery and the overall strategic capability to implement the initiative.

## 6.3 Resource requirements

Before drilling down into the operational details, consider what high-level resources are needed for implementation. This will involve analysis at a whole-of-government level on what resources are required to facilitate collaboration over the life cycle of the initiative. Factors that will need to be considered include:

- any constraints that may affect the flexible management of resources, including ‘silo-ing’ within and across agencies
- the rules, regulations and processes associated with financial management
- the chosen delivery approach, which will affect the operational resources required
- the expertise needed in the management team (including in planning and finance, human resources, and assets and systems, as well as any specialist knowledge).

### Financial resources

Managing the budget involves the allocation of administered and departmental funds against project deliverables so that agencies can effectively track expenditure over time and get early warning of likely overspend, underspend or possible savings. Expenditure is an indicator of whether implementation is ‘on budget’—part of the objective ‘on time, on budget and to expectations’.

The budget must reflect whole-of-life costs, and clearly distinguish departmental and administered items, as well as capital and operating expenses. Any costs associated with external expenditure or capital items should also be included.

Financial planning processes should also encompass and document:

- the proposed delivery approach, including contracting, partnering, regulation, client co-production, multi-party networks
- strategies for negotiating and managing delivery arrangements
- the deliverables, and whether there is a need for staged delivery
- the desirability of testing the initiative through a pilot.

For initiatives involving high-value, high-risk and/or complex procurements, the implementation plan should also document:

- the timing for the public release of documentation, tender and contract finalisation, and the contract period
- the procurement method (for example, open tender, prequalified tender or limited tender)
- any probity issues
- the funding model (for example, milestone payments and up-front payments, if any)
- supplier selection processes (for example, tender evaluation and contract negotiation)
- arrangements for ongoing contract management, including monitoring, review and evaluation.

## Non-financial resources

Managing non-financial resources is just as important as managing financial resources in achieving the outcomes of the initiative.

Effective management of non-financial resources requires an early review of the scope and breakdown of work to identify the resources that are critical to successful implementation. These may include staff with specialist skills, consultants, a co-located office venue, ICT equipment, transportation, and data and information systems.

Management teams with appropriate capabilities and skills will need to be assembled. Effective planning of human resource requirements to deliver an initiative should address:

- demand—consider the number of staff required and the sort of skills and knowledge needed to manage delivery
- supply—develop a skills register of available staff to outline skills, experience and capacity
- matching of supply and demand—match the available staff with required activities to ensure that high-priority initiatives are sufficiently resourced
- gap closure—identify shortages in supply (numbers, skill or experience), and take steps to fill these gaps through recruitment, enlisting the expertise of external providers, or staff training and development.

The implementation plan should outline the availability of the non-financial critical resources required—whether they are available internally, sourced through other Commonwealth agencies and/or purchased externally. It should also outline either a strategy to manage or acquire the resources for the duration of the initiative or the procurement strategy, if the resources are to be acquired externally. This information could be summarised in the implementation plan (see example in Table 3) and linked to the high-level objectives of the initiative.

**Table 3: Example of a table summarising critical resource management arrangements**

Critical resource	Critical to: (activity/phase deliverable )	Strategy to manage or acquire critical resource	Duration (days or dates)	Est. cost

Where appropriate, resourcing issues should be reflected in other relevant sections of the implementation plan—such as those on risk, monitoring, review and evaluation, and governance.

### **Rural Industries International Expo—resource management**

In designing resource management arrangements for the Rural Industries International Expo proposal, key issues to consider include:

- Has a business case been developed?
- What is the budget for the project? Have funds been allocated over the life of the project? Is the budget linked to key milestones?
- Are there sufficient resources to establish a dedicated team to manage the project? How many staff are required? What skills and expertise will they need to deliver the project?
- Does the Department of Rural Affairs have the necessary resources to meet these staffing requirements? Is it possible to source expertise from other Commonwealth agencies to deliver the project? Do you need to implement recruitment strategies to meet resourcing demands?
- What delivery options—such as procurement, grants, partnerships, co-production—will the agency use to implement the project? What outputs will be achieved through these delivery arrangements? How will these arrangements be managed?
- How will funding be broken down over the two-year life of the project (from initiation through to delivery and realisation of benefits)? What is the breakdown between departmental and administered items? How are these funds linked to the key project deliverables?
- What is the contingency plan if funding agreements with the state government cannot be reached? Do you have the resources to manage any risks associated with implementation?
- Are any other non-financial resources—such as venue, ICT equipment, transportation—critical to the delivery of the project? Are these resources available internally? If necessary, is there a strategy in place to acquire these resources?

## 7 Management strategy

### 7.1 Why is a management strategy needed?

Considering management strategy during the development of an initiative is important because it provides an idea of whether timeframes and outcomes are achievable within the proposed financial, human and technical resources. The management strategy also sets out key decision points in the process, which will indicate whether the governance framework and reporting and monitoring arrangements will deliver these goals.

Most departments provide guidance and stipulate requirements for program and project management of government initiatives. In the main, these documents say *what* should be done, not *how* or *why* you should do it.

The management strategy should make a realistic estimate of the resources required to deliver the initiative and provide decision-makers with the information they need.

Initiatives that are highly complex, cross-portfolio, cross-jurisdictional and require delivery through numerous stakeholders may benefit from a dedicated project management office (PMO). Some agencies maintain central PMOs that provide services, ranging from provision of templates through to the expertise of highly skilled project managers who can provide tailored assistance or involvement in projects.

Assuming that the people who developed the policy are best placed to implement it can be a costly error. The skills and processes required for business as usual could be insufficient to manage time, resources and outcomes for defined projects. The skills and capabilities of the management team need to match the initiative's requirements throughout its life.

### 7.2 Project management methodologies

Departments and agencies that use a standard project management best practice suite (such as [PProjects IN Controlled Environments](#) (PRINCE2®) and the [Project Management Body of Knowledge](#)) are encouraged to understand the principles, themes and practices of the methods described in the suite, and to avoid a 'robotic' or 'template-driven' approach. The methods are flexible and are specifically designed to be tailored to suit the context of a program or project. They are also designed to be embedded into an organisation so as to match its culture and management processes.

All FMA Act agencies with an annual ICT spend of greater than \$2 million are required to implement the Portfolio, Programme and Project Management Maturity Model (P3M3™) to assess their capability to commission, manage and realise the benefits of ICT investment.



## 7.3 Management capabilities required

Planning and managing the implementation of policy require skills and experience beyond those relating to the subject matter of the policy area concerned—they require leadership and management expertise in such areas as best practice program and project management methods, resource planning (financial and non-financial) and risk management. Departments and agencies need to pay particular attention during implementation planning to the adequacy of financial and human resources—including the mix of skills and expertise—required for successful delivery of the initiative.

Obtaining such skills involves a combination of formal learning, coaching and on-the-job experience. The APS Policy Implementation Network (APS PIN), agency centres of excellence, APS Custodians of Best Practice (for example, in Benefits Realisation Management) and the [Government Program Community of Practice Forum](#) provide contacts who can share their experiences and approaches to developing these skills and agency capabilities.

There are also industry bodies that specialise in program and project management qualifications and competencies. These include:

- **APMG–Australasia** ([APMG](#))—the Australasian arm of the Official Accreditor for the OGC suite of frameworks. APMG specialises in the accreditation and certification of organisations, processes and people, within a range of industries and management disciplines.
- **Australian Institute of Project Management** ([AIPM](#))—the peak body for project management in Australia. AIPM has been instrumental in advancing the profession of project management in Australia over the past 30 years. It fosters the professional application of project management skills and techniques as the preferred process for delivering business outcomes.
- **Project Management Institute** ([PMI](#))—a global body with Australian chapters that serve practitioners and organisations with standards that describe good practices, globally recognised credentials that certify project management expertise, and resources for professional development, networking and community.

We encourage departments and agencies to understand and consider what these bodies can offer.

## 7.4 Key considerations

The following questions should be addressed in the development of an implementation plan:

- Does the implementation plan describe the capability and expertise needed to manage the project?
- Does the agency currently have the capacity to manage the project or is additional assistance necessary?
- Does the project need to harness any capabilities from other agencies and when would these capabilities be required?
- Which project management methodology underpins the project and how has this been tailored to meet the outcomes of the project?
- Does the chosen project management methodology tailor corporate tools, resources and reporting processes to the requirements of individual measures and programs and capture information required to make decisions?

### **Rural Industries International Expo—management strategy**

In designing the management strategy for the Rural Industries International Expo proposal, key issues to consider include:

- Has an assessment been done on what expertise is required to manage the project? Does the Department of Rural Affairs possess the capability and expertise needed to manage the project?
- Does the Department of Rural Affairs currently have the capacity to manage the project or is additional assistance necessary? Does the project need to harness any capabilities from other agencies? Which agencies need to be involved? When would these resources be required?
- What project management methodology is available in the Department of Rural Affairs to underpin the project? Is this adequate to manage a project of this nature?
- How will the chosen project management methodology tailor corporate tools, resources and reporting processes to the requirements of individual measures and programs and capture information required to make decisions?

## 8 Additional information

### 8.1 Useful references

The Cabinet Implementation Unit's [toolkit papers](#) each have a comprehensive annotated list of resources for particular aspects of implementation planning.

The following references may also be useful when preparing your plan:

Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), Program Evaluation in the Australian Public Service  
<http://www.anao.gov.au/Publications/Audit-Reports/1997-1998/Program-Evaluation-in-the-Australian-Public-Service>

ANAO, Performance Standards and Evaluation  
<http://www.anao.gov.au/Publications/Speeches/1996-1997/Performance-Standards-and-Evaluation>

AccountAbility 2011, *AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard*, at  
[www.accountability.org/images/content/5/4/542/AA1000SES%202010%20PRINT.pdf](http://www.accountability.org/images/content/5/4/542/AA1000SES%202010%20PRINT.pdf)

Department of Finance and Deregulation, Benefit Realisation Management  
[www.finance.gov.au/publications/gateway-publications/docs/Benefits\\_Lessons\\_Learned\\_flyer.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/gateway-publications/docs/Benefits_Lessons_Learned_flyer.pdf)

Australian National Audit Office: Better Practice Guide: Public Sector Governance  
[www.anao.gov.au/Publications/Better-Practice-Guides/2005-2006/Public-Sector-Governance](http://www.anao.gov.au/Publications/Better-Practice-Guides/2005-2006/Public-Sector-Governance)

Department of Finance and Deregulation, Better Practice Guide: Risk Management  
[http://www.finance.gov.au/comcover/docs/Better\\_Practice\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.au/comcover/docs/Better_Practice_Guide.pdf)

Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), *Development and Implementation of Key Performance Indicators to Support the Outcomes and Programs Framework*  
<http://www.anao.gov.au/Publications/Audit-Reports/2011-2012/Development-and-Implementation-of-KPIs-to-Support-the-Outcomes-and-Programs-Framework>

### 8.2 Contacts

For further information on implementation planning, please contact the Cabinet Implementation Unit:

[www.dpmc.gov.au/implementation](http://www.dpmc.gov.au/implementation)

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