Project Management Fact Sheet:

Language Matters

Version: 1.2, November 2008

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Tasmania
Explore the possibilities

There is a number of language conventions used in the project business planning process. Using conventions assist in the precise and accurate expression of objectives, outcomes, outputs etc and make it easier to differentiate between project terms.

The conventions do not have to be followed and there are other, equally valid, ways to express a concept. However, using a common language allows all people involved in projects to understand each other more clearly.

What are the language conventions?

For examples of objectives, target outcomes and outputs see the table following.

Objective

A project objective is a statement of the overarching rationale for why the project is being conducted. It focuses on what the project is going to achieve, rather than what is produced. A project can have one or more objectives, which do not need to be measurable.

A useful way to frame the objective is to answer the question 'why are you doing the project?' The result is a one sentence statement, or series of statements, starting with the word 'To'.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the benefits or other long-term changes that are sought from undertaking the project. They are achieved from the utilisation of the project's outputs. Outcomes are linked with objectives, in that if the outcomes are achieved then the project's objective(s) have been met.

Target Outcomes for a project are outcomes that have a measurable benefit and will be used to gauge the success of the project. Usually there will only be a small number of target outcomes for any project. Each measure will be linked to one or more target outcomes. At the end of the project the measures will help answer such questions as 'what have we achieved?' and 'how do we know?

Target outcomes are expressed as a sentence in the past tense and usually start with a word ending in 'ed', such as improved, increased, enhanced or reduced. Framing target outcomes in this way makes it easier to determine their success measure.

Outputs

Outputs are the products, services, business or management practices that will be required (produced) to meet the identified outcomes. They may be new products or services, or 'fixed things' called alterants. Outputs link with outcomes, in that the outputs are used by the project's customers to achieve the outcomes.

Outputs are usually expressed as nouns.

Examples

OBJECTIVES	TARGET OUTCOMES	OUTPUTS
To implement an effective and efficient process for the collection of monetary penalties while upholding the principles and values of social justice.	Strengthened integrity of the criminal justice process through better management of the monetary penalty process. *Measures:* *Reduction in the total value and number of payments that cannot be allocated to a fine.* *Reduction in the number of summonses incorrectly issued for fines that have already been paid.* More efficient and earlier collection of monetary penalties through changed processes. *Measure: Reduction in the mean time to pay an infringement notice and a court fine compared with current mean time to pay.*	New legislation to allow for the creation of the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service (MPES). A new unit in the Department of Justice and Industrial Relations called the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service. A software system. Changed legislation.
The major objectives for this project are: To be able to mount a whole-of government co-ordinated response to successfully manage an FMD or BSE outbreak, in partnership with industry, the community and other governments; To be able to meet national obligations with regard to emergency diseases and pest preparedness; and To develop a robust system to successfully respond to agricultural emergencies.	Enhanced level of preparedness on behalf of the State to manage an FMD or BSE Outbreak. *Performance Indicator: Identified deficiencies.* *Measure: Number of deficiencies addressed.* *Baseline: Current number of identified deficiencies.* *Target: All high priority deficiencies addressed.* Increased confidence, on behalf of government, industry and the community, that Tasmania is prepared to manage an FMD or BSE outbreak. *Performance Indicator: Media responses.* *Measure: Level of criticism in responses, industry group response to the Plan.* *Baseline: Current low level of interest, TFGA and Obendorf reports recommending additional resourcing.* *Target: Universal pick-up of story without criticism.*	A Status Report on current preparedness to be delivered to the Project Sponsor and Steering Committee. An FMD and BSE Preparedness Training Strategy Plan to engage both the private and government sectors. Draft Legislative amendments to the Animal Health Act and Animal Brands and Movement. Revised Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual (TOM) and Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan (EAD).

Activities/tasks

Activities and tasks are the work that needs to be done to produce the outputs for the project. Activities are the larger, higher-level units of work, which can be broken into tasks, the smaller units.

Activities and tasks are written in the present tense using action verbs.

For example:

- Collect Agency examples of small project documentation for publication on the Knowledge Base
- Develop a Communication Strategy as Appendix to YSP Business Plan
- Develop barrier control systems
- Identify appropriate earthmoving equipment resource
- Participate in the National simulation exercise
- Develop contractual arrangements between government and private practitioners to facilitate training and surveillance activities
- Investigate UK situation with respect to feral cats, foxes and deer, and draw conclusions with respect to Tasmanian wildlife equivalents

Milestones

A milestone is a significant scheduled event that acts as a progress marker in the life of a project. It is usually the completion of a key activity or task, or an externally imposed deadline. A milestone is like a toggle switch – at any point in time, it is either completed or not completed. The start of an event is rarely a milestone.

Milestones are expressed as sentences in the past tense.

For example:

- Five agency examples of small project documentation for publication on the Knowledge Base collected
- Communication Strategy developed

- Barrier control systems developed
- Appropriate earthmoving equipment resource obtained
- Participation in the National simulation exercise completed
- Contractual arrangements between government and private practitioners developed to facilitate training and surveillance activities
- Paper presented to Steering Committee on the UK situation with respect to feral cats, foxes and deer including conclusion with respect to Tasmanian wildlife equivalents

Risks

A risk is any factor (or threat) that may adversely affect the successful completion of the project.

Risks are written as short sentences or fragments. Fragments complete the sentence 'the risk to this project is the event that …', or a variant such as 'the risk to this project is that there will be…'. Often risks also include a short description of the consequences of the risk occurring.

For example:

- Lack of Agency support for Project Managers involvement on working groups etc., which may lead to insufficient Project Managers being available to assist in the development and quality assurance of the Project Outputs
- Instability of Project team, which may lead to a compromise of the resources knowledge management and incomplete Project Outputs
- Political pressure leading to divergence of resources
- Lack of availability of suitably trained staff to respond to media enquires in the event of an exotic disease outbreak
- The group and community seeing the Plan as an end in itself (rather than building a system prepared for implementation)

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Where to get additional help

- Refer to the *Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines*

- Further information and resources are available from
  www.egovernment.tas.gov.au

Acknowledgements

This Fact Sheet contains elements of the *Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines* prepared by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Examples from this fact sheet have been adapted from:

Monetary Penalties Enforcement Project – Stage 2 Business Case Overview prepared by the Department of Justice and Industrial Relations, 2002

The 'Year of the Small Project' Project Business Plan prepared by the Inter Agency Policy and Projects Unit, Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2003

The Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) Preparedness Project Business Plan Phase One prepared by Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, 2002

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