Project Management Fact Sheet:

Managing Small Projects

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Department of Premier and Cabinet

Tasmania
Explore the possibilities

This Fact Sheet has been developed to provide additional material that is specifically relevant to managing small projects to complement other project management resources.

It outlines tips for managing small projects, questions you should ask yourself during a project and lists a set of resources for managing small projects.

What is a Project?

A change of any kind in or for an organisation needs to be managed to ensure the change process is as smooth and successful as possible. That organisational change process is usually managed as a project.

Projects involve a group of planned, inter-related activities that create a new or improved product or service, to meet the stated project objectives. A project should be achievable within a relatively fixed timeframe and resource constraints, and the scope of the project should take these into consideration.

What is an activity versus a small project?

An **activity** may be something that requires no structure or planning to execute, or may be an ongoing or repetitive process. In the initial stages, or the first time an activity is performed, it may be useful for it to be treated as a project to allow the learnings to be recorded. This structure may assist the organisation in ensuring that the second and subsequent execution of the activity is efficient and effective.

A **small project** on the other hand is one where there is a project team of 2 or less, the project's schedule is flexible, of internal interest only, has a budget of less than $25K, impacts a single business unit, and has no major dependencies or inter-related projects.

Why do small projects need to be managed?

The value of good project management is that you have standard processes in place to deal with all contingencies, regardless of the project size, complexity or impact on your organisation.

Using sound project management techniques and processes will give you a higher likelihood that your small project will be completed on time, within budget, to an acceptable level of quality, and will have achieved its objectives.

Consider all aspects of how to manage a project, and build the right processes for your small project.

How do I determine if my project is small or large?

Project size can be based on the project's timeframe, complexity, strategic and political importance, total cost, the size and skill levels of Project Team and the level of change the project will create. However in the end it is up to you as the Project Manager, and your Project Sponsor/Line Manager to determine whether the project is classified as small, medium or large.

Knowing the project size will allow you to determine the project management processes that best suits the requirements for successful project completion.

The *Project Sizing Calculator* may also be used as a tool to assist you in determining the size of your project.

What are the main things I need to consider in managing my small project?

No matter what the size and complexity of a project, there are 11 key elements (areas) that the Project Manager needs to consider: planning and scoping, governance, outcome realisation, stakeholder management, risk management, issues management, resource management, quality management, status reporting, evaluation and closure.

The extent to which these areas are addressed depends upon the size and complexity of the project. It is not appropriate for all projects to do all project management activities to the same level of detail and with the same degree of discipline. For small projects, it is very important to scale down the project management processes and documentation to suit your needs.

Managing Small Projects Resources:

Resources that are specifically designed to assist in managing small projects have been developed. These include:

- *Project Proposal Template* - is usually the first document outlining what change is proposed. It is the document that converts an idea or policy into the details of a potential project.

- *Project Business Plan Template* - is the management document for the project. It is owned, maintained and utilised by the Project Sponsor/Line Manager to ensure the delivery of project outputs and the realisation of project outcomes. It is also the management document for the Project Manager.

- *Risk* and *Issues Registers*, and *Status Report* Templates.

- *Review & Closure Report Template* - is the final document produced for the project and is used by senior management to assess the success of the project, inform future projects, 'tidy up' any loose ends and formally close the project.

- In addition to the above resources, *Appendix 1* contains a list of questions (as a checklist) that you may find useful when you think your planning is complete, but before you start your project.

Tips from Project Managers

Several Small Project Management Forums were held in 2003. As part of these forums, Project Managers and participants were asked about their experiences in managing small projects. The resulting learnings have been included in this fact sheet. You may find their advice and comments useful when you are managing a small project yourself.

- Resourcing:
  - Don't be shy to ensure adequate resourcing
  - Resource the project through the whole cycle
  - Determine risks for the project and prioritise the resources
  - There needs to be a commitment from management to provide adequate resources
  - Need for flexibility and goodwill when projects are under-resourced
  - Size of budget does not always determine the importance of the project
- Documentation:
  - Do not write too much – no-one will read it!
  - Keep documentation relevant and short
  - Know your audience!
  - Tailor the project management methodology to suit your project

- Use templates and delete what you don't want
- There will always be something you haven't thought of – review and update constantly

- Size and Scope of Project:
  - Stand back and judge the scope of the project
  - Does not matter what size the project is – the same key elements are present

- General and Team Learnings:
  - There is no such thing as a perfect project!
  - Projects can go wrong
  - Feel reassured re shortcomings – others experience difficulties, and face similar lack of support
  - There is more personal interest from the Project Manager with small projects
  - Get the commitment of the project team

- You need the right skill set in the project team to deliver the project outputs
- Need to have a 'champion' of the cause (might not be the Project Manager)

Where to get additional help

- Refer to the *Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines*

- Reference: Mike Watson (1998) *Managing Small Projects: a practical guide*, Project Manager Today publications, GB. ISBN1900391023

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

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Tasmanian Government Project Management Framework
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Appendix 1 – Questions You Should Ask Yourself

Planning & Scoping	Do you know why you are doing the project and how your organisation will gain the benefits?	❑
	Do you know what you have to produce, and by when?	❑
	Have you worked out what is included in your project, and what is NOT included in your project?	❑
	Are you documenting your planning eg in a Project Business Plan?	❑
Governance	Is it clear to whom you will hand over the products/services delivered by the project and do you know who is responsible for producing each of these?	❑
	Is everyone clear on their roles and responsibilities?	❑
Outcome Realisation	Have you considered how the changes on the organisation that may come about as a result of the project will be communicated and managed? Have you developed meaningful measures for your target outcomes?	❑
Stakeholder Management	Have you made a list of all of the people who may be affected by or may affect the progress and successful completion of the project?	❑
	Have you decided how you are going to let the stakeholders know about the progress of the project, or involve them in the project itself?	❑
Risk Management	Are there any conditions or risks that may hold-up or adversely affect your project and its progress?	❑
	What are you going to do about these risks to minimise their effect?	❑
Issues Management	Is there a way to record and address any issues that may be raised throughout your project?	❑
Resource Management	Have you determined the amount of money that is available for the project?	❑
	Do you know the resources you will require for the whole of the project including human, physical and information resources?	❑
Quality Management	How are you going to make sure the products/services you will produce are to an acceptable level of quality? What project management progress will you be applying?	❑
Status Reporting	Is it clear to whom, how and how often you will report on progress?	❑
Evaluation	Have you decided how and when the success of the project will be measured?	❑
Closure	Have you considered how you will finish the project?	❑
	Have you planned the celebrations?	❑