



Developing better business cases:



A Business Case Playbook

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Developing better business cases

The purpose of this Playbook is to help countries develop business cases which support investment decisions in digital transformation and ICT.

The Playbook explores what works, and what does not.

On behalf of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Australia has coordinated and prepared this Business Case Playbook.

It is based on the experience of Australia, and other members, including Canada, Denmark, Estonia and the United Kingdom.

The [Playbook](#) covers the foundational concepts of a business case required to present a compelling argument for a digital or ICT investment. Each Play explores a core component of business case development, supported by helpful links.

About OECD E-Leaders

Since 2008, the [OECD Working Party of Senior Digital Government Officials](#) (E-Leaders) has convened to discuss the opportunities, challenges and priorities surrounding the digital transformation of the public sector.

The E-Leaders brings together senior digital government decision makers to discuss and reflect on how to better address the digital transformation in the public sector and create smarter, inclusive, productive, more innovative, and responsive governments.

The E-Leaders Working Party holds an annual meeting to discuss relevant topics on digital government, data-driven public sector, open government data and service design and delivery. As part of the E-Leaders Working Party, and in order to foster peer learning and sharing of best practices, several Thematic Groups are organised each year. These Groups provide spaces for exchanging practical implementation and identify common challenges across Member and participant countries.

In the context of the E-Leaders Thematic Groups, the Government of Australia has coordinated and prepared this Business Case Playbook. The Playbook aims to provide actionable and practical guidance to articulate the value proposition for coherent digital, technology and data projects across the public sector, as established in the [OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies](#).

Get started

A business case is an opportunity

All governments seek to optimise the success of their investment in digital transformation and ICT infrastructure.

A business case is a formal framework used to explain to the need to start an initiative. It gives decision-makers a clear understanding of the problem to be solved and offers practical solutions.

The business case explains to decision-makers the purpose, risks, and intent of a proposed ICT investment. It should give the decision-makers confidence that the recommended solution has undergone rigorous analysis and that it is the best option to achieve your objectives and intended outcomes.

Business cases should be a mandatory tool in managing digital and ICT initiatives.

The OECD notes the importance to public sector transformation of developing 'clear business cases to sustain the funding and focused implementation of digital technologies projects'.

Many projects struggle to deliver on cost targets, deadlines, and expected benefits. Using a business case provides a basis for planning and implementation. It is a basis for measuring the ongoing viability of the government's investment in a digital service or ICT system.

A compelling business case adequately captures both the business need and how the proposed investment meets that need.

Business cases are evaluated to ensure:

- the investment has value, importance, and relevance.
- the implementation will be properly managed.
- the organisation has the capability to deliver the benefits.
- the organisation's resources are working on the highest value opportunities.
- initiatives with inter-dependencies are undertaken in the optimum sequence.

Not all business cases are the same

All business cases, whatever the format, share some common characteristics. They describe a problem, consider different ways to solve that problem, and recommend the most suitable solution for the specific circumstances.

The level of detail, complexity of analysis and even the size of the document should be proportionate to the cost, complexity and scale of the proposal being considered.

The Business Case may be the entire argument presented to decision-makers, it may be part of a suite of documents, or it may inform the documents that decision-makers use to agree to the investment.

Remember that your organisation may have specific requirements on the format of the business case, depending on the size of the investment and the implementation risks of your proposal.


All good business cases share common qualities

The structure and content of your business case needs to be:

- clear – it is easy to understand and logically structured.
- succinct – it reflects quality not quantity.
- persuasive – it presents a robust and compelling argument.

The business case will focus on achieving clear and measurable outcomes. It will consider realistic and feasible options and address how you will:

- manage changes to business process and policy.
- develop, acquire, and use technology.
- ensure that your people have the skills, knowledge and culture to implement and use the solution.
- develop, use and store data and information.



A business case for a project should...include a statement of the project's objectives and should present clear concise and compelling reasons to the decision maker to support funding for the project.

Australian National Audit Office
Better Practice Guide - *Planning and Approving
Projects an Executive Perspective*

Introduction to the Plays

Developing a business case is an iterative process. You may start with a clear idea of how you think the problem can be solved, only to discover there are better alternatives through collecting evidence and exploring options. The policy environment may also change, which could be outside of your control, leading to new issues, and new solutions. A new technology or product might offer innovative opportunities to resolve the problem.

These ten actions (called **Plays**) describe the essential processes, components and actions of developing a business case to support investment in digital transformation and new ICT capability.



The Plays will help you describe the value your proposal brings to the users of your service, and its broader economic, social and policy benefits.

The [Establish your team](#), [Engage your sponsors](#), and [Scope the preliminary work](#) Plays set the **foundations** for your work. They will help you establish your team, plan your approach, and engage with the senior people responsible for sponsoring the business case.

The [Understand the problem](#), [Engage stakeholders early and often](#) and [Explore options](#) Plays will help you undertake **discovery** - define the problem in context and understand what change would look like for your users and stakeholders.

The [Define options](#) and [Select your preferred solution](#) Plays help you develop and **test** practicable solutions to the problem.

The [Draft the business case](#) Play will help you make a convincing argument and plan for change.

The final Play [Review and refresh](#) provides advice on how to stay on track after your business case is approved.

Using the Plays

Developing a business case is not a linear process. You will need to refer to each Play at multiple points as you draft and refine your business case.

Each Play consists of four parts:

- A **description** of the purpose and key steps in the Play.
- A description of the **key activities** for the Play.
- **Questions** to help you consider the issues.
- **Links** to further information and resources, such as examples of how other countries tackle the components of the Play.

Establish your team

A diverse, multidisciplinary team helps ensure that you fully consider the business problem and canvass practicable options.



Play description

Pull together a multidisciplinary team of the right people to develop the business case.

Traditionally, organisations have divided capabilities across functional areas. In contrast, a multidisciplinary team draws members from a range of disciplines.

People with expert skills will need to join your team to help manage specific components, such as costings or risk assessments. The team could expand to include people from complementary agencies or external contractors for intense bursts of effort.

Key activities

Identify the skills you need

An effective multidisciplinary team is built on a diverse mix of skills.

Consider the type of skills you need to help you develop the business case. You may require generalist policy advisers, as well as subject matter specialists, business architects, or content designers. The people who you expect will implement or deliver the solution should also be involved.

Teams with a diversity of skills and knowledge should work together throughout the lifecycle of the business case to ensure each stage benefits from different perspectives.

Carry out a stocktake of in-house skills and identify any gaps

Identify who has the necessary experience in this work and establish their availability to contribute.

Consider whether you need to engage external specialists with specific skills such as costing, procurement, risk management or expertise with particular technologies.

Consider the advantages of working across government

Consider whether you will need to collaborate and work with other organisations or agencies within your government.

Determine how the team will work and whether it needs to be physically co-located.

Establish the team

Set up your multi-disciplinary team and establish your processes and practices for working together.

Agree how the team will manage their work and maintain relationships.

You should establish regular work practices and cadence, such as daily stand up meetings, and sprints of work and retrospectives.

Consider how the team members maintain relationships with the usual work areas while participating in the multidisciplinary team.

Questions to consider

- Who do you need in your multi-disciplinary team to ensure that it represents the key players to deliver an effective business case?
- What capability and experience do you need in the people who will contribute to the business case?
- How will you structure the team to develop your business case?
- What requirements does your government have for business cases? Do you have access to the skills to meet these requirements?
- Who can you seek advice from on the business case process and content?
- How will you structure your work patterns to make the best use of the skills and experience of your team members? Do you need specialist skills (such as an Agile coach) to assist you?

Resources

[The Little Book of Digital](#) (Australia) – This handbook describes some basic concepts and shares some ideas on the best ways to start digital transformation in your organisation including establishing a multidisciplinary team and adopting user-centred design to create better results.

[Team Playbook](#) – A series of workshop resources developed by software company Atlassian for addressing common team challenges and starting important conversations.

[Digital, Data and Technology Profession Capability Framework \(United Kingdom\)](#) – A guide to digital, data and technology roles in government and the skills needed to do them.

[Four agile ceremonies, demystified](#) – A guide to using agile work practices with your team.

Engage your sponsors

Engaging the sponsor to actively drive, support and provide guidance on developing the business case will help ensure that it addresses the needs of the decision-makers.



Play description

Engage with the senior executive responsible for the business case to be the sponsor. Work with the sponsor to arrange fit-for-purpose governance in the context of your organisation and government.

Your sponsor sets the vision for the overall service and their commitment is crucial to its success.

Ensure the sponsor has time to commit to supporting the business case. Your sponsor will also be a good source of stakeholder connections and will be able to facilitate links to people and information that are vital to undertaking your business case.

Key activities

Establish a relationship with your sponsor

Confirm and engage with the executive sponsor to secure their strong commitment. This will provide top down support that ensures decisions relating to the business case are made by the right people, at the right time.

Understand your sponsor's work preferences and needs

Meeting your sponsor's preferred ways of working and expectations will enhance your working relationship and help ensure their engagement. The scale, complexity and risk profile of the business problem being addressed also influence the sponsor's participation. Some sponsors will expect greater day-to-day visibility of the development of the business case than others.

Find out how your sponsor likes to operate, their preferred means of communication and discussion, and how often they expect to engage with the business case as it is developed. Determine if they have reporting templates or mechanisms that they find useful and that you could adopt.

You can also include your sponsor in the team's stand-ups and showcases. These may provide your sponsor with confidence they understand your progress without additional reporting. It will also highlight to your sponsor more agile ways of working.

Agree with your sponsor an approach for reporting progress and resolving issues.

Determine internal and external governance arrangements

Consider how the internal governance is organised to review and approve the development of the business case. Also consider the external governance structures that will assess the business case and make the final decision.

Ensure the business case is developed appealing to the requirements of both sets of decision-makers.

Questions to consider

- Who needs to sponsor and review your business case?
- Who do you need input from?
- How will you structure and develop your business case?
- What requirements does your government have for business cases?
- Who can you seek advice from on the business case process and content?
- How can your sponsor assist in engaging other key stakeholders?

Resources

[The Little Book of Digital](#) (Australia) – This handbook describes some basic concepts and shares some ideas on the best ways to start digital transformation in your organisation including establishing a multidisciplinary team and adopting user-centred design to create better results.

Scope the preliminary work

This process will help ensure you develop a quality business case within the required timeframes of the decision-makers.



Play description

Understand what you will need to do and how long it is likely to take.

Work backwards from milestone dates you need to meet to develop the business case. Be aware of any timing or requirements that is specific to your organisation. Ensure you set up review points, and allocate realistic time for feedback, including from external stakeholders. Establishing milestones is a good way to mark the progress of your business case.

Milestones are also helpful for identifying elements that depend on other business case components.

Key activities

Understand the 'when'

Plan for the relevant dates and work backwards to ensure you have the right review points in place. Your government or organisation may have set dates for business case approvals. Much of your work should be possible in parallel but be aware of any timing that depends on other components.

Understand the 'how'

Find out if your organisation or government has an established process to assess and approve business cases. This can vary depending on the size and complexity of the business case. For example, the Australian Government requires a two-stage review process to create confidence that they are choosing the best option for a digital or ICT investment.

Know the objectives of your organisation

Your business case must align to the objectives of your organisation. Define the objectives clearly and describe how your plan will incorporate them into your approach and outcomes.

Know the priorities of your government

Identify relevant policies and priorities (especially those relating to digital transformation and the government's use of digital and ICT). Align your options and implementation approach to the priorities to strengthen your business case.

Questions to consider

- When do you need to submit the business case for decision?
- What is your plan to meet that timeframe?
- Who needs to sponsor and review your business case?
- How will you structure and develop your business case?
- What requirements does your government have for business cases?
- Who can you seek advice from on the business case process and content?
- Is there an organisational or whole of government approach to solution architecture or design that you need to consider?
- How can you learn about your users? Form hypotheses and test ideas?

Resources

[The Little Book of Digital](#) (Australia) – This handbook describes some basic concepts and shares some ideas on the best ways to start digital transformation in your organisation including establishing a multidisciplinary team and adopting user-centred design to create better results.

Understand the problem

This process ensures you can define the future state that you are trying to achieve.



You should be able to clearly describe the business problem, and what would be the outcomes, including changes to user experience, that would result from successfully resolving it.

You want your reader to understand why this problem deserves attention.

Play description

Outline the problem the business case seeks to resolve. You should fill gaps in your knowledge as they appear and identify factors that impact the problem. Think about how the problem relates to your current environment, and how it sits within a broader context. Analyse the problem against the backdrop of your organisation and your government's priorities.

Understand how the business problem interacts with user needs and experience. You should keep users at the centre of your solution design and delivery. Conduct user research to identify existing pain points. Use these insights to design effective options. You should use surveys and quantitative and qualitative research methods interviews to identify user needs and inform your business case options. User research and engagement should happen throughout the development of the business case.

You need to retest your understanding of the users' pain points and experience as you develop and consider different solutions to the business problem.

Define the outcomes you aim to achieve to address your business problem. The future state will need to deliver on these outcomes by changing your organisation's culture, ways of working, processes, business models and technologies.

Once you understand the problems you are trying to solve, you need to understand what solving those problems could look like. What is your vision for users of your service? What would a day in the life of your users look like? What would a day in the life of your organisation's employees look like?

Keep in mind that your understanding of the future state design will evolve as you develop and refine your options.

You want your reader to understand why this problem deserves attention.

Key activities

Put the problem in context

Identify how the business problem came about and what factors impact the problem. This will help you understand the potential complexity of the problem. You also need to identify the priorities for your organisation. Think about how resolving the business problem might align with these priorities.

Understand user needs and the reason for change

Conduct research with users to understand how people interact with your service or product, and why the current state is not working. Summarise why the change is required and how an investment in technology, processes and people could support this change.

Explain 'why now'

Describe why the problem needs to be addressed now, and not later. Help the decision-maker understand why this is a priority and what will happen if the current situation continues. A clear description of the current situation will form an important part of the "No Change" option.

Design with the user at the centre

Design the future state with the user at the centre of the solution. The business case should identify who are the users and what they need. Engage with the people who will be using the service.

Define the future experience

There are various ways you can create a positive experience for your users. Think about how you can change functions across your organisation to meet the needs of the user. This includes functions relating to people, processes and technology.

Understand and identify what evidence and data would be available for you to measure the change.

Questions to consider

- What government outcomes is your organisation delivering?
- What is the strategic direction of government?
- What issues need to be addressed in the current environment?
- What is the problem that the business case is trying to solve?
- What is the context in which the problem occurs?
- What are the strategic priorities of your government?
- Who are the stakeholders that are impacted?
- What data do you need to investigate and understand the business problem?
- Do you understand how users currently interact with your service?
- Do you understand the policy behind your service and how this defines your response?
- How does the future state help achieve government outcomes and organisational objectives?
- What are the priority user needs?
- How are you planning to address these?
- What does the future user experience look like?
- What do your people, process and technology need to look like to enable the future user experience?

Resources

[Concept Case \(Canada\)](#) – This document is used to describe a business problem or opportunity and the conceptual future state and intended outcome(s) that could result from a potential digital project.

[Business Case Canvas\(Estonia\)](#) – Estonia has adopted a business canvas approach for reviewing and prioritising Digital and ICT projects. This presents the key element of the business case in a one-page (A4) format.

[Business case model \(Denmark\)](#) – Denmark has established a governance framework around business cases that includes an independent [Council for ICT](#) undertaking an annual assessment of ICT projects on a variety of parameters as part of a [portfolio management](#) approach.

[Digital Service Standard Criteria \(Australia\)](#) – Provides detail across Australia's Digital Service Standard criteria which is made up of 13 best practice principles for designing and delivering government services.

[Agile and Government services: an introduction \(United Kingdom\)](#) – Introduction to how some organisations approach different implementation methods.

[User research \(United Kingdom\)](#) – A guide to help you understand user needs: plan research, prepare for sessions, share and analyse findings.

Engage stakeholders early and often

Strong stakeholder engagement will enable open collaboration when drafting and delivering the business case, even if they do not necessarily support the proposed solution.



Play description

You should know who your stakeholders are. Business cases require support from inside and outside of your organisation, and you should seek this input regularly.

A collaborative approach with your stakeholders will bring them on the journey and provide useful insights. Stakeholders can include people and organisations who are actively involved in your service or product, or who would have an interest if there are changes to your product or service. This could include other government organisations, third party service providers or industry groups.

Your multi-disciplinary team may include people who represent stakeholder groups, but it is important to ensure that you consult stakeholders directly, and that they participate in the development of your business case.

Keep in mind your government may have its own requirements to making investment decisions (such as specific methods for costing options) that will determine who you need to work with in developing the business case.

Key activities

Identify your stakeholders

Use different processes such as brainstorming to determine who your stakeholders are. Think about all the people who are affected by your product or service, and the people who have control or influence over it. Who is part of the supply chain for your product or service? Who provides it with information you need to perform your work, or who relies on your work to be able to do theirs? Who is in a position to either support or hinder your business case?

Understand your stakeholders

Use stakeholder analysis to understand your stakeholders' interests and concerns. Consider the best way to keep each stakeholder or group of stakeholders informed and engaged according to their interest in your business case.

Establish support from relevant people

Ensure stakeholders agree to the reason for change by framing the issue in terms that relate to them. A common goal will ensure you have stakeholder support when drafting the business case. Remember that stakeholders may be internal or external to your organisation and might include other levels of government and non-government service providers.

Questions to consider

- Who are your stakeholders?
- How influential is each stakeholder? Are there stakeholders you will rely on to successfully develop the business case?
- What are the stakeholders needs and expectations of your product or service?
- What are the stakeholders needs and expectations of your business case?
- Which stakeholders will expect to be kept informed of the development of your business case and who will expect to be more actively engaged?

- How will you communicate with stakeholders?
- How will you monitor that stakeholder expectations are met?
- How will you manage resistance to change from stakeholders?

Resources

[Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis Tool \(Australia\)](#) - This is an example of how some organisations may identify the key stakeholders required to be engaged in the development of a business case.

Explore options

Generate genuine alternate solutions to your business problem – including innovative approaches that may not be readily apparent.



Play description

Identify potential solutions that could address the business problem. There are many methods you can use for developing options, such as brainstorming or scenario planning. You might conduct a design sprint or hackathon to quickly prototype potential solutions. Each option needs to be viable and achievable, and meaningfully different from the other options you might be presenting. It is unhelpful to propose options that you cannot practically implement— due to limitations in your organisation or in your country’s strategic context, such as funding constraints or government policy.

Make sure you understand and can describe the current service. This is your baseline. It provides the basis from which you can measure the advantages, disadvantages, and costs of other options you consider. It is also your ‘No change’ option.

Key activities

Define your baseline

This is the ‘**No Change**’ option. It provides the basis from which you can measure the advantages, disadvantages, and costs of other options. It may be that the most sensible solution, at least for the time being, is not to make a major change.

Identify feasible options

Try to identify all the options that could achieve the desired outcomes in the current context. Consider any constraints, such as policy or technology, that might limit what options are practically feasible and achievable.

Hold workshops where stakeholders can collaborate to solve problems and share perspectives. You might like to think about options in terms of changes to people, process and technology.

Analyse and compare each option

Establish the criteria against which you will evaluate the options. These should suit the needs of your organisation and government. Your analysis should include a comparison of costs, benefits and risks as a minimum. Refer to [Define options](#) for further detail.

Align options to outcomes

Assess each option against the desired outcomes to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is important to note that different options may deliver different measurable benefits against the proposed outcomes.

Questions to consider

- What are all the possible options?
- Is each option a genuine and viable solution to the business problem?
- Have you agreed the criteria you will use to assess each option?
- Have you considered options ranging from minimal technology upgrades to more innovative digital and ICT solutions? This includes those options that may challenge your current ICT planning and service delivery approaches.
- Have you considered the policy and regulatory implications of each option?
- How will each option affect identified stakeholder groups?
- What are the costs and benefits of delivering each option?
- What are the likely consequences of delivering each option?
- Have you considered all the costs, benefits and risks associated with the business case across the lifecycle of the investment (financial and non-financial)?
- How do the options align to your government objectives and priorities?

Resources

[Business Case Options Framework \(NZ\)](#) – The options framework provides a structured approach to identifying and filtering a broad range of options for delivering policies, strategies, programmes and projects.

[Service design and delivery process \(Australia\)](#) – A guide to what to do in Discovery, Alpha, Beta and Live stages of service design and delivery.

Define options

Your examination of the costs, benefits and risks of each option forms the core argument of your business case.



The decision-makers should be able to understand the comparative advantages, costs and weaknesses of each option, assessed against the organisation's capability to deliver the solution.

Your conclusion and recommended option should be clearly supported by this evidence.

Play description

Explore viable options in detail and assess how they will achieve the desired outcomes. Assess each option against the desired outcomes to identify strengths and weaknesses. Consider the comparative costs, benefits, and risks of each solution. Different options may deliver different benefits and costs for similar outcomes. Accurately calculating the costs and benefits of each option will help decision-makers compare the different options presented in the business case. It is important to be clear how you will measure the costs and benefits for each option.

Similarly, assessing the risks of each option make them easier to compare. You need to consider risks based on how they may impact the desired outcomes, the organisation, and the government. There may be some risks which are common across all options, while the impact of the risk may be different.

Test the viability of implementing each option. You should consider the capability of your organisation to implement each option. You should also consider if other government organisations or the private sector need to be engaged in developing or implementing a solution. You may need to approach the market to identify whether there is an existing solution to the business problem, or to clarify the costs of implementing a solution.

Key activities

Understanding the costs and benefits

Decide how you will calculate the costs of the proposal

There are many methods available for generating costings depending on the experience of those preparing the business case. There is no universally recognised single best approach for developing costs, but other government agencies such as your Finance or Treasury Department (or equivalent) may guide you. The size, complexity and type of initiative may determine whether you use an agile or waterfall funding model. For example, waterfall project management approaches may be appropriate when updating ICT infrastructure. More agile approaches may be more useful to help you build services that meet complex user needs, or to deliver value quickly.

Make sure you explain any assumptions made. Initial cost estimates may be imprecise but will become more accurate as you work through the business case process.

Involve a variety of people and subject matter experts to inform your costs

Talk to the people who will be making decisions on the business case to understand what they want included. Relevant groups within your organisation can also help you establish the costs of internal services and resources. Subject matter experts and other stakeholders outside your organisation are another good source of costing advice.

Cost based on scope and implementation approach

Options with greater ICT complexity and scope are likely to cost more. The choice of delivery method will also affect the way costs are calculated. Agile and waterfall approaches will each require unique considerations.

Quantitative and qualitative measurements of benefits

Give a broad overview of the benefits each option will deliver. Include both quantitative and qualitative measurements of the outcomes. For example, you might intend to measure changes in staff hours (quantitative) and gain feedback on customer experience through a survey (qualitative). Work with the people who will be implementing the project to define the metrics that are most valuable.

Conduct detailed cost and benefit analysis on the preferred option

Perform a more detailed analysis of the costs and benefits once decision-makers have agreed with the preferred option. Look for guidance and templates on conducting cost benefit analysis from agencies in your government with responsibility for overseeing business case processes.

Understanding the risks

Determine the level of risk the organisation is willing to take

Talk to people within the organisation to understand what level of risk and reward is acceptable to address the problem. For example, an organisation may not accept risks which, introduce complexities for customer interactions with the organisation.

Understand what could go wrong for each option

There are various types of risks to consider. These include technology, business, funding and implementation risks. Ensure you consider the same type of risks across each option, so they are easy to compare. Remember, there will be risks for not doing anything at all.

There are actions that can be taken to reduce risks to an acceptable level (or risk mitigation activities).

Think about different ways to avoid or minimise the risk. Look to include different approaches to reduce the probability and impact of the risk occurring. Your options can also be supported by including risk ratings before, and after mitigation, to assist decision-makers in their evaluation of the proposal.

Plan how you will manage risk

Use a risk management approach which works for your organisation. There may be existing tools and templates available from your organisation to help guide you. As part of your implementation approach (refer to [Draft the business case](#)), define a process to continually identify and manage risks. Give specific consideration on how cyber security and privacy risks will be managed.

Questions to consider

Understanding the costs and benefits

- Who can help with developing costing models?
- What degree of costing competence or maturity do you have within your organisation?
- Can you draw organisation expertise into the development of costs?
- How are you going to measure the size and complexity of the problem?
- What are the current digital and ICT support and maintenance costs?
- How complex are the business requirements and the digital and ICT capability?
- How much do staff cost and how long will they be required for?
- How long are staff required over the implementation period?
- How many people will use the new digital and ICT capability?
- What will the organisation require to maintain and support the new digital and ICT capability once it is implemented?
- Have you agreed on the benefits with the relevant stakeholders?

Understanding the risks

- What is happening within your organisation, government, industry, and globally that might affect your business case?
- When, where, why and how are things likely to divert from your proposed outcomes? Think about categories of risk: e.g. operational, strategic, reputational, ICT and infrastructure, stakeholder relationships, contracts and procurement, service interruptions, the public, workforce capability and capacity.
- Are the risks internal or external?
- Who might be involved or affected if something goes wrong?
- Are there any risk dependencies (will treating one risk impact your determination of another risk)?
- Are you regularly engaging stakeholders to ensure the risks stay up-to-date?
- Have you considered privacy risks?
- Have you considered cyber security risks?
- Have you considered the legal risks that might affect the options in your business case?

Resources

[Cost Estimation Guide \(Australia\)](#) – This is a guide to allow robust costing to occur as there are a number of principles that should be covered when they are estimated.

[Cost-Benefit analysis document \(Australia\)](#) – Guidance on why cost-benefit analysis is important.

[Cost-benefit analysis document \(Australia\)](#) – Detailed guidance on how to use cost-benefit analysis to assess proposals.

[Risk analysis is included in the Regulation Impact Statements guidance document \(Australia\)](#) - Detailed guidance on how to use risk analysis as part of the business case.

[ICT Risk Management Guidance \(New Zealand\)](#) – This document goes through the steps for assessing risk and measuring it in your business case.

[ISO 31000:2018 Risk management — Guidelines](#) – The International Standard provides guidelines on managing risk faced by organizations. You can customise these guidelines to apply to any organization and its context.

[Agile delivery \(United Kingdom\)](#) – How to work in an agile way: principles, tools and governance.

Select your preferred solution

Validate the evidence that you have considered in comparing each option. Assure that your recommended solution is achievable and fit for purpose; and will resolve the business problem.



Play description

Analysing your options will likely highlight one that addresses the business problem within optimal timeframes, early delivery of value to users, and with the best value for money. You should be able to clearly explain why you consider that it provides the ideal solution to the business problem. This is the preferred option.

You should re-test your preferred option against what you learned during the discovery process. Does the proposed solution align with your proposed future state? Do the expected outcomes of the preferred option resolve your business problem? Does the solution meet user needs? Are you able to obtain the technical and other specialist skills required to implement your preferred solution?

Key activities

Compare your options

Identify what represents value for money. Remember, value for money may not necessarily be the cheapest option. Your business problem and context may determine the value placed on benefits, risks, costs and timeframes. Summarise and compare your options with these factors in mind. Be aware of the way your decision-maker assigns value to these factors.

Justify your preferred option

Determine which option provides the best outcome and value for money. Summarise where it stands out specifically against the other options and highlight the key benefits. Explain why the other options are not preferred. You may need to complete a more detailed analysis of the costs, benefits and implementation approach for your preferred option (Refer to [Define options](#)). Align your preferred option with the broader context

Explain how the preferred option delivers on the outcomes and how it aligns to the organisation's and government's policy objectives.

Questions to consider

- Why is the preferred option worth pursuing?
- How do you define value for money?
- Why does the option need to be pursued now and what is the impact if it is not?
- Why are the other options not preferred?
- How will the preferred option be delivered?
- Who will deliver the preferred option?
- Does your organisation and government have the capacity and capability to deliver this option?

Resources

[Detailed business case of preferred option \(Australia\)](#) – This document provides guidance on the steps and the detail proposed to justify the preferred option.

Draft the business case

Your analysis of the preferred option should form the beginnings of a more detailed implementation and risk management plan.



Ensure that the business problem and outcomes you discuss here are reflected throughout the business case consistently.

Play description

This is the phase where you take the evidence and your experience in considering potential solutions to the business problem and pull it all together as a compelling story.

Explain how your preferred option compares to the other options and highlight the key benefits. Explain why the other options are not preferred.

Make sure that your readers can clearly understand the scope of the business problem you are trying to resolve, and what would be the outcomes of successful change. Your business case should explain how the preferred option delivers on these outcomes and how it aligns to the organisation's and government's policy objectives.

You may need to complete a more detailed analysis of the costs, benefits and implementation approach for your preferred option compared to the other options.

Explain in detail how your organisation would implement the preferred solution. You should demonstrate that your recommended approach to implementation provides the best opportunity for resolving the business problem, and that you have identified the resources needed to manage and support the implementation successfully. This includes establishing fit-for-purpose governance, risk management and assurance arrangements. Ideally, you would also flag how you have considered lessons learned from other initiatives.

The implementation approach will vary based on factors such as the complexity of the proposed digital or ICT solution and your government's requirements.

You should consider adopting agile approaches that will increase the likelihood of success and deliver early value to users. For example, developing a Minimum Viable Product that meets user needs, and allows for early learning, delivers value quickly. This approach of iterative and incremental delivery, coupled with continuous learning and improvement, gives you confidence that the solution adapts and responds to evolving user needs over time.

Key activities

Break up the work into manageable pieces

Choose the appropriate delivery method for the project (e.g. agile, waterfall or blended). For a delivery method like agile, your plan will need to explain how you will

incorporate and adapt to changes in the specifications. Plan out the key milestones and how and when they will be achieved. You will also need to consider how risks and dependencies will be managed. For example, the completion of related projects.

Determine the organisational capacity and capability

Determine the existing skills of your workforce and their availability to participate when needed. Plan what and when key skills are required. Plan for training requirements.

Factor in technology procurement

Determine how you will source your technology capabilities. This can be complex depending on your government and legal requirements. Working with suppliers external to your organisation is a large undertaking. Speak with the relevant people in your organisation to ensure you include references to the appropriate policies.

Set up governance frameworks to manage risk

Identify who will be responsible for how key decisions will be made and how issues will be resolved. You may have already identified who these people are as part of setting up governance for decisions related to the business case. Refer to [Define Options](#) for more detail on managing risks.

Define and measure success

Define measurement criteria which will be used to determine the success of the project. Establish checkpoints to ensure the project is on track to deliver the agreed outcomes. This will provide confidence to the decision-makers that outcomes and benefits will be closely monitored.

Have a plan for change

A new digital or ICT capability will change processes and people. Develop a plan to prepare and support people to embrace the change. This will include training, communication, and transition activities. This plan will be critical in minimising the risk and disruption associated with the change whilst also helping to achieve outcomes.

Questions to consider

- What delivery method allows you to manage risk and stakeholder expectations effectively?
- What internal and external factors may impact implementation?
- What are your key milestones? When are your key milestones?
- What skills and capability are required to deliver the project? How long do you need these people for?
- Are there any tools or frameworks to help you assess capacity and capability?
- How will you source and implement the digital or ICT solution?
- Are you complying with the requirements of your organisation?
- Have you defined your benefits? How you are going to measure them in consultation with your stakeholders?
- How can you design your implementation to deliver benefits early?

- How ready is your organisation for change?
- Who will be impacted by the project?
- Who will have influence over the success of the project?

Resources

[Assurance Reviews Process Overview \(Australia\)](#) – This is a guide on assurance practices that help capture important considerations in program delivery.

[ICT Business Case Guide \(Australia\)](#) – Guidance to assist Australian Public Service entities to develop sound business cases when seeking to make significant ICT investments.

[First Pass Business Case Template \(Australia\)](#) – Provides an example of the detail required by some organisations before developing the business case for a major project proposal.

[Second Pass Business Case Template \(Australia\)](#) – Provides an example of the detail required by some organisations to consider a major project proposal.

[Appraisal and evaluation in central government – \(United Kingdom\)](#) Provides detailed guidance on the development of project and program business cases using the Five Case Model.

Review and Refresh

Congratulations. The decision-makers have considered the options in your business case and agreed to a way forward.



The work you have done to evaluate the costs, benefits, risks, and implementation details of your preferred solution will inform the project or program of work that now commences to implement the proposal.

This Play will help ensure that the business case is always up to date and relevant to the proposal's implementation. It will help you prepare to implement the solution to your business problem, and successfully deliver a solution that adapts to changing needs.

Play description

Once it has been approved, the business case becomes the basis for implementing change and a key tool for managing that change.

The business case is also a living document. It should be kept up to date reflect the reality of the implementation of your product or service.

At key points in the proposal's implementation, you should formally check your progress against the business case.

As your proposal's implementation progresses, circumstances will change. For example, you may identify new risks to the implementation, or find ways to eliminate a risk. Changes in approach or technology might vary the costs of the proposal. You might identify new benefits or improvements for users that had not been foreseen when the business case was developed.

You should also periodically review the business case to ensure that the proposed solution is still appropriate and fit for purpose.

Early and iterative releases of your product or service will help you address risks early, respond to emerging user needs, and identify opportunities to innovate and provide better solutions to the problems described in the original business case.

Your governance and assurance arrangements are also important in ensuring you stay on track.

Maintaining line of sight to the objectives set out in your business case is assisted by ensuring your governance bodies are presented with information which clearly sets out progress towards achieving the stated objectives.

Key activities

Establish appropriate oversight and governance

Establish internal and external governance mechanisms and processes that are appropriate for the scale, complexity, and risk profile of the project. These will have been outlined in the implementation components of the business case.

For high risk/high value investments it can be helpful to engage independent assurance to ensure delivery teams remain alert to possible optimism bias around achieving objectives. Independent assurance can also help teams effectively manage key risks to successful delivery.

Your government may also have formal external assurance processes (such as Gateway Reviews) that will apply at key milestones of your work.

Consider when you will review the business case

Schedule reviews of the business case as part of your implementation planning.

For example, in an agile product development, you might schedule a formal review as part of your retrospective at the end of a sprint or run of sprints, or on the release of a version of the service.

At the end of your discovery you will have a clear understanding of who the users of your service are, their current needs and pain points as well as their experience when using the product or service. You should use your learnings to update the business case and incorporate the hypotheses you will be testing against in alpha.

As you move into alpha the service team will identify possible solutions to address the problems they learnt about during discovery. You should capture the solutions you are exploring, what you have learnt through prototype and usability testing, and if this changes the outcomes you are seeking. You should refine your recommended solution based on your new understanding of the scope of your Minimum Viable Product and the decisions that led to this position.

In a conventional waterfall-managed project, you might review the business case at the end of a project phase.

You might consider aligning formal review of the business case to formal implementation and funding reviews, scheduled at the conclusion of a phase of the implementation or release of a specific product or service.

Questions to consider

- At what points in your work will you review your progress against the business case?
- At what points would it be appropriate to review and refresh the business case?
- What are the appropriate oversight and governance mechanisms for your product or service?
- Do you need to include representatives from other organisations within the government in your oversight and governance mechanisms?
- Do you need independent assurance for the delivery of your product or service against the business case?
- Does your government or organisation have formal assurance or governance processes that apply to your work?
- How will you formally agree and document any changes to the business case?

Resources

[Assurance Reviews Process Overview \(Australia\)](#) – This is a guide on assurance practices that help capture important considerations in program delivery.

[Gateway Reviews Process \(Australia\)](#) – The Gateway Review is a series of short, intensive reviews are conducted at critical points across a proposal's implementation lifecycle (normally over several years).

Suggested Resources

Foundations

[The Little Book of Digital \(Australia\)](#) – This handbook describes some basic concepts and shares some ideas on the best ways to start digital transformation in your organisation including establishing a multidisciplinary team and adopting user-centred design to create better results.

[Digital, Data and Technology Profession Capability Framework \(United Kingdom\)](#) – A guide to Digital, data and technology roles in government and the skills needed to do them.

[Four agile ceremonies, demystified](#) – A guide developed by software company Atlassian to using agile work practices with your team.

[Team Playbook](#) – A series of workshop resources developed by software company Atlassian for addressing common team challenges and starting important conversations.

Discover

[Concept Case \(Canada\)](#) – This document is used to describe a business problem or opportunity and the conceptual future state and intended outcome(s) that could result from a potential digital project.

[Business Case Canvas\(Estonia\)](#) – Estonia has adopted a business canvas approach for reviewing and prioritising Digital and ICT projects. This presents the key element of the business case in a one-page (A4) format.

[Business case model \(Denmark\)](#) – Denmark has established a governance framework around business cases that includes an independent [Council for ICT](#) undertaking an annual assessment of ICT projects on a variety of parameters as part of a [portfolio management](#) approach.

[Digital Service Standard Criteria \(Australia\)](#) – Provides detail across Australia's Digital Service Standard criteria which is made up of 13 best practice principles for designing and delivering government services.

[Business Case Options Framework \(NZ\)](#) – The options framework provides a structured approach to identifying and filtering a broad range of options for delivering policies, strategies, programmes and projects.

[Agile and Government services: an introduction \(United Kingdom\)](#) – Introduction to how some organisations approach different implementation methods.

[Service design and delivery process \(Australia\)](#) – A guide to what to do in Discovery, Alpha, Beta and Live stages of service design and delivery.

Test

[Cost Estimation Guide \(Australia\)](#) – This is a guide to allow robust costing to occur as there are a number of principles that should be covered when they are estimated.

[Cost-Benefit analysis document \(Australia\)](#) – Guidance on why cost-benefit analysis is important.

[Cost-benefit analysis document \(Australia\)](#) – Detailed guidance on how to use cost-benefit analysis to assess proposals.

[Risk analysis is included in the Regulation Impact Statements guidance document \(Australia\)](#) – Detailed guidance on how to use risk analysis as part of the business case.

[ICT Risk Management Guidance \(New Zealand\)](#) – This document goes through the steps for assessing risk and measuring it in your business case.

[ISO 31000:2018 Risk management — Guidelines](#) – The International Standard provides guidelines on managing risk faced by organizations. You can customise these guidelines to apply to any organization and its context.

[Detailed business case of preferred option \(Australia\)](#) – This document provides guidance on the steps and the detail proposed to justify the preferred option.

[Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis Tool \(Australia\)](#) – This is an example of how some organisations may identify the key stakeholders required to be engaged in the development of a business case.

Iterate

[Assurance Reviews Process Overview \(Australia\)](#) – This is a guide on assurance practices that help capture important considerations in program delivery.

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