

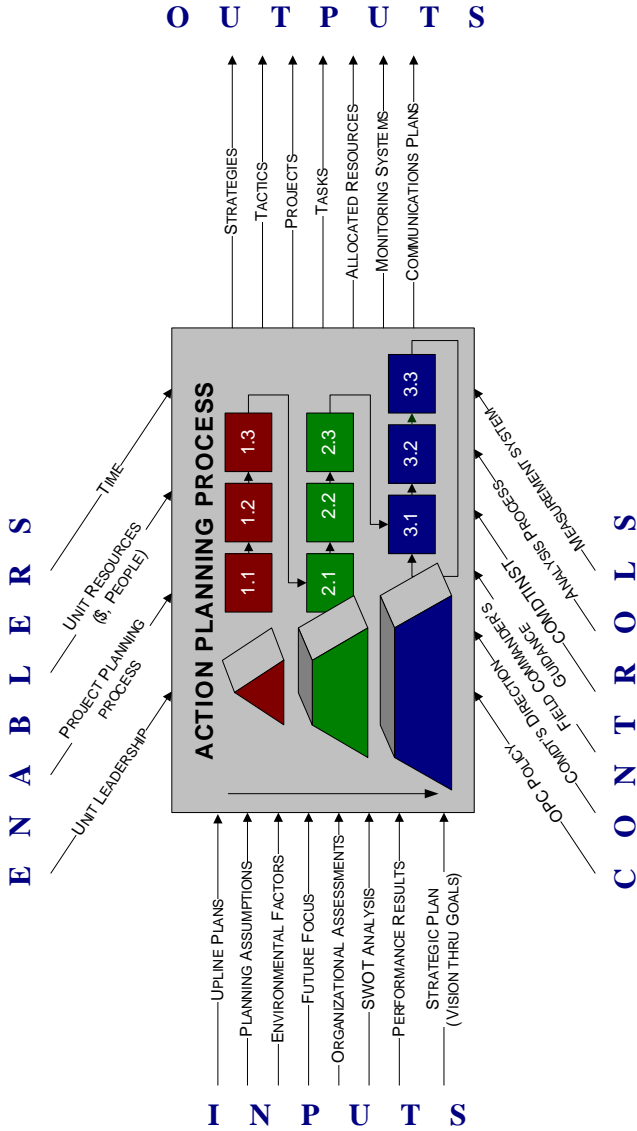
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Semper **P**aratus



Action Planning

ACTION PLANNING CONTEXT DIAGRAM



ACTION PLANNING CHECKLIST

Strategic Planning

<input type="checkbox"/> Mission	<input type="checkbox"/> Vision
<input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical Success Factors
<input type="checkbox"/> Goals	

Conduct Strategic Action Planning:

<input type="checkbox"/> Break Down Organization Strategic Plans
<input type="checkbox"/> Assign a Project Team
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify Actions to Meet Strategic Goals
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish Projects from Actions
<input type="checkbox"/> Scope Projects/Develop Abstract
<input type="checkbox"/> Assemble Abstracts for Leaders' Review
<input type="checkbox"/> Review, Refine, and Approve Abstracts

Execute and Monitor the Project:

<input type="checkbox"/> Create Project Work Plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct Project Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Finalize Project Deliverables
<input type="checkbox"/> Periodically Update Project Status
<input type="checkbox"/> Track Project Progress
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct Periodic Progress Reviews

Wrap Up the Project:

<input type="checkbox"/> Hand Off Project/Close Out Project Team
<input type="checkbox"/> Finalize Documentation/Update Project Status
<input type="checkbox"/> File Documentation and Reports
<input type="checkbox"/> Review Results/Strategic Outcomes

ACTION PLANNING

DESCRIPTION: The process by which an organization details in advance how something is to be accomplished, including goal definition, task/activity identification, and decision integration to ensure success.

USE THIS TOOL: Annually, to help a Coast Guard organization (Area, District, Sector, department, command, or unit) implement its strategic plan.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: *Beginner to Practitioner Level*

INTRODUCTION

This booklet constitutes process steps to facilitate Action Planning, particularly related to Strategic Plans. The steps in this booklet will guide the consultant through three phases: 1) strategic action planning, 2) project execution and monitoring, and 3) project closeout. The booklet is meant to be used as a stand-alone document or in tandem with other booklets.

It is important to note that there is some overlap between the *Action Planning* and *Strategic Planning* Booklets, especially in those areas relating to development of strategies and tactics. The consultant should be familiar with both references prior to embarking on a strategic or action planning effort.

ACTION PLANNING MODEL

Action planning for large, complex Strategy Deployment efforts requires more than *back-of-the-envelope* planning. A more disciplined process should be considered for developing strategies, tactics, and projects. This approach will ensure more vertical and horizontal integration, coordination between functional departments, and synchronization of disparate activities.

In their book *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, Bossidy and Charan highlight the major reason most organizations fail to implement strategy; they call it *The Execution Gap*. According to Bossidy and Charan, to understand execution, you have to keep three key points in mind.

- Execution is a discipline and integral to strategy.
- Execution is the major job of leaders.
- Execution must be a core element of an organization's culture.

Execution, in their words, “is a systematic process of rigorously discussing the hows and whats, questioning, tenaciously following through and ensuring accountability.”

The *Action Planning Booklet* focuses on EXECUTION. This phase of the planning process is the key to *operationalizing* the strategy that leaders have so adeptly fashioned. The best, most well-thought-out strategic plans are worthless if they cannot be implemented. The process described in this booklet demonstrates this discipline. Features of this process, shown in the Centerfold, include activities for developing the action plan, engaging leaders through a *catch-ball* process, and developing the mechanisms to follow through and monitor accountability.

PROCESS STEPS

1.0 CONDUCT STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING

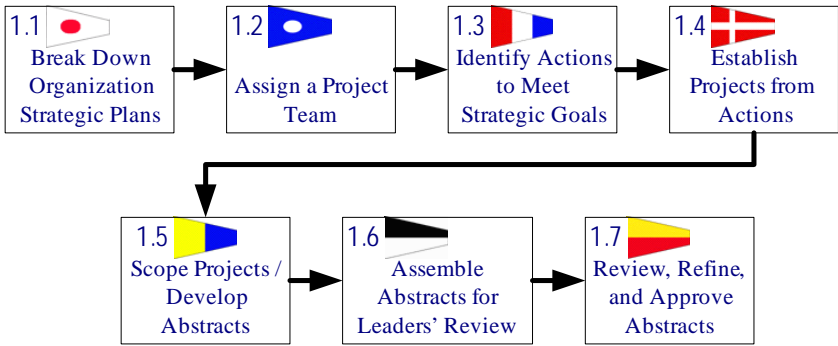
The Action Planning methodology supports the achievement of an organization’s Strategic Business Plan by focusing on the execution of strategy-oriented projects.

CONVERTING STRATEGY TO ACTION

- Ensures implementation of the Strategic Plan by driving execution
- Establishes a disciplined approach to strategic project execution
- Ensures proper accountability and follow-through on commitments
- Coordinates interrelated project efforts across the enterprise
- Creates synergies through cross-functional teamwork and communication

The following steps promote organizational synergy around projects that add strategic value, on a continuous basis.


D E T A I L E D C H E C K L I S T		T O O L S
1.1	Break Down Organization Strategic Plans	Goal Worksheet
1.2	Assign a Project Team	Team Chartering
1.3	Identify Actions to Meet Strategic Goals	Brainstorming
1.4	Establish Projects from Actions	Affinity Diagram Tree Diagram
1.5	Scope Projects/Develop Abstracts	Project Abstract
1.6	Assemble Abstracts for Leaders Review	
1.7	Review, Refine, and Approve Abstracts	



Conduct Strategic Action Planning

1.1


BREAK DOWN ORGANIZATION STRATEGIC PLANS

 Refer to the Organizational Effectiveness Toolset (CD): *Goal Worksheet Template*

The organization's Strategic Plan – Vision, Mission, Outcomes, CSFs, and Goals – establishes general organizational direction. Six to eight strategic goals can generate action items that will engage the organization for months or years. These goals must be broken down into specific strategies and tactics. Planning teams can use the Goal Worksheet Template to flesh out goal details. The worksheet is adequate for most Coast Guard applications. However, more ambitious goals require more robust planning. Detailed Action Plans should be established using the Strategic Project approach, which requires the project planning methodology described below.

1.2

ASSIGN A PROJECT TEAM

 Refer to the Stakeholder Alignment Toolset (CD): *Team Charter*

Strategic Action Plans should be developed with front-line involvement. Leaders are responsible for strategy development. Action Plans, however, must be developed in conjunction with those responsible for carrying them out. Leaders should assign teams to provide detailed planning and execution for these projects.

1.3



IDENTIFY ACTIONS TO MEET STRATEGIC GOALS

Sometimes it is helpful to ask the planning team to suggest a set of strategic projects before assigning them to teams. The following exercise can help create this suggested list of actions:. In the retreat or workshop, ask leaders: **How will we accomplish our goals?** The group should generate a set of actions they know must be taken to effectively accomplish the stated goals. Leaders should then assign responsibility for each task to a division or team to accomplish.



Refer to the
CG PIG:
Brainstorming

1.4



ESTABLISH PROJECTS FROM ACTIONS

The Project Team should further define the actions recommended by leaders.



Refer to the
CG PIG:
Affinity Diagram

1. Using Affinity Diagramming, the team should cluster action items for each goal into logical groupings.
2. Each significant action or group of actions should then be defined as a Strategic Project.
3. Strategic Projects should be scoped and executed in the same manner as any other project effort.

Action Planning Organization

The Action Planning Team is generally subordinate to the Strategic Planning Team. The Action Planning Team uses the Strategic Planning Team's output to create and execute the action steps, implementing the leaders' vision and strategy. Action Plans are usually developed within divisions of an organization or within cross-functional teams that are responsible for a certain area of emphasis (e.g., Human Relations Committee, Process Improvement Team). Each of the entities must have a champion on the Strategic Planning Team that helps to link the Strategy to the Action. This Leadership Sponsor is the *linking pin* between the two

1.5



SCOPE PROJECTS/DEVELOP ABSTRACTS

All projects should then be *scoped* by the project team using the Project Abstract Template. The Project Abstract Template identifies:



Refer to the Organizational Effectiveness Toolset (CD): *Project Abstract Template*

- WHAT the project is intended to achieve;
- WHY the achievement is important;
- WHO will participate – their roles and responsibilities;
- HOW the project will achieve its objectives and milestones;
- WHEN the products of the project will be delivered.

1.6



ASSEMBLE ABSTRACTS FOR LEADERS' REVIEW

The Abstract reflects the team's expertise and resource estimates, and serves as an input to leaders' final *Go/No-Go* decision. A Command Project Coordinator collects and assembles all Project Abstracts from the assigned project teams for leaders' review.

The Project Team and the command leaders play catch-ball until the project is finally approved by the leadership team.

Playing Catch-Ball

During Action Planning, leaders involve front-line crewmembers or civilian employees to a much greater extent than during the strategy development. The unit's divisions and teams assist leaders by identifying actions that the organization can take to achieve its goals.

The divisions and teams play *catch-ball* with leaders by *tossing* their recommendations to leaders for a reality check. Once reviewed, these strategies are tossed back to the front line to be further broken down into tactics, resourced, and executed. Catch-ball continues throughout the Action Plan execution cycle; both groups continue the communication cycle to monitor progress, resolve problems, and update status.

1.7



REVIEW, REFINE, AND APPROVE ABSTRACTS

Prior to detailed project planning, leaders should review Project Abstracts to ensure suggested actions are in line with its intentions and expectations. Leaders verify due dates, scrutinize team makeup, finalize project assignments, and allocate resources (time, materials, people, and funding) as appropriate. Final approval sets the Execution phase in motion.

Project Abstract Contents

- **Project Description:** Definition of the project, business need, and customer
- **Leadership Sponsor/Project Manager:** Names of responsible individuals
- **Project Outcomes:** Benefits expected; results to be achieved
- **Metrics:** Measures to determine project success
- **Deliverables:** Outputs to be produced from the project
- **Milestones:** The key events and deliverables on a timeline
- **Resources:** Funding and people required to complete the project
- **Key Interfaces:** Individuals and organizations the team should coordinate/interface with
- **Potential Challenges/Issues:** Key project concerns, risk factors, or barriers
- **Comments:** Additional project detail

2.0 EXECUTE AND MONITOR THE PROJECT

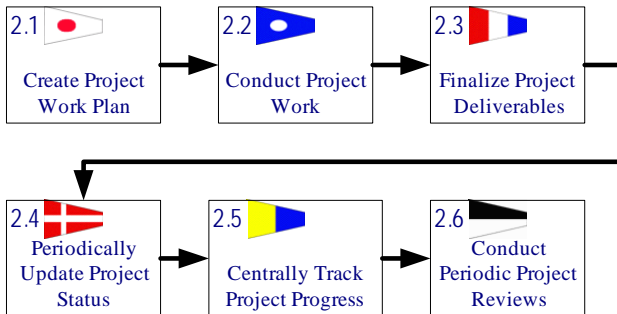
Once the project has been approved in concept through the Project Abstract process, detailed project planning must follow to ensure project teams know what is required and how to get work done. Once the detailed planning is complete, actual work begins.

Successful project execution includes monitoring and controlling project progress. This involves collecting and disseminating performance information and addressing issues and concerns that may negatively affect the project. The monitoring process provides stakeholders with information about how resources are being used to achieve project objectives. This process includes:

- Status Reporting – describing where the project currently stands;
- Progress Reporting – describing the Project Team’s accomplishments;
- Forecasting – predicting future project status and progress.

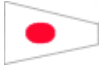
The following detailed checklist outlines the essential steps in this process.

DETAILED CHECKLIST		TOOLS
2.1	Create Project Work Plan	Project Abstract GANTT Chart
2.2	Conduct Project Work	
2.3	Finalize Project Deliverables	
2.4	Periodically Update Project Status	Status Reports
2.5	Centrally Track Project Progress	
2.6	Conduct Periodic Progress Reviews	Progress Reviews




Execute and Monitor the Project

2.1



CREATE PROJECT WORK PLAN

 Refer to the Organizational Effectiveness Toolset (CD): *Project Abstract Template*

Proper planning should precede any quantifiable project work. Anyone who has ever planned a project knows how to plan a strategic project by sequencing a list of tasks or tactics and assigning responsibility. The Project Manager should use whatever convention is customary for documenting the plan. A Project Abstract and GANTT Chart are usually sufficient.

2.2

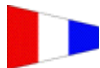


CONDUCT PROJECT WORK

Project Managers are responsible for all aspects of project execution. They ensure team members meet their assigned obligations. They do this through various means, including holding frequent team meetings, receiving status reports, and frequently checking in with team members.

- The Project Team should methodically execute project tasks. Intra-team communications are important and must be frequent enough to ensure the proper coordination between tasks.
- The Project Manager should work closely with the Leadership Sponsor to ensure that project requirements are being met, paying particular attention to deliverables and timelines.

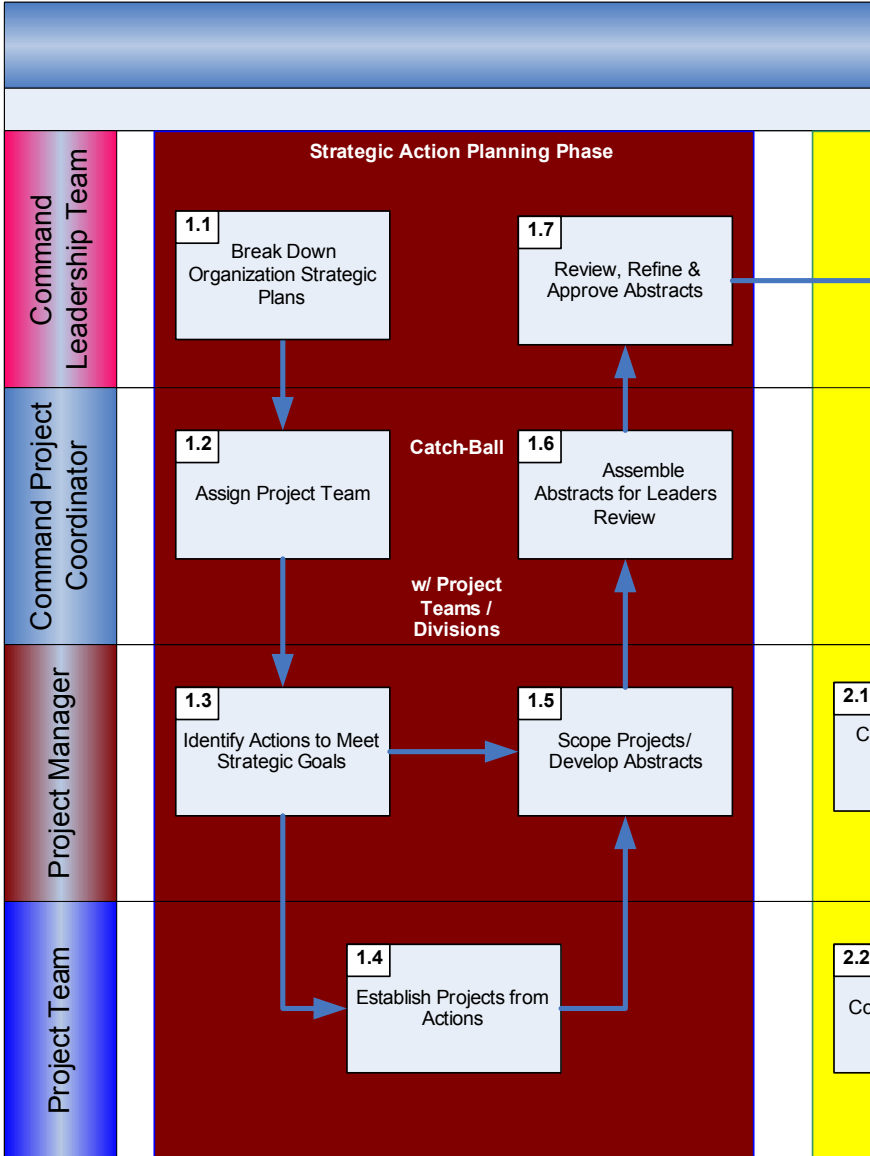
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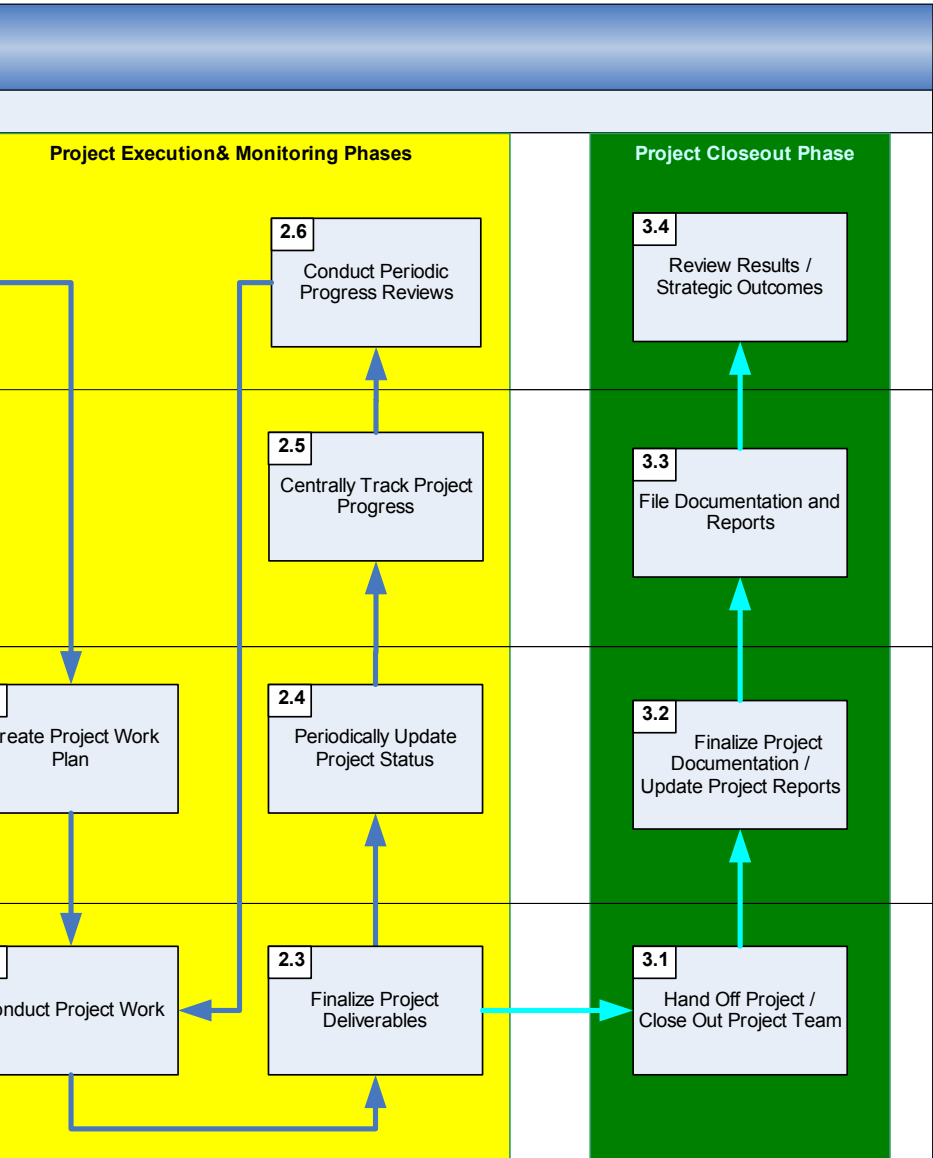
FINALIZE PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Projects usually produce a product or service. These deliverables must often satisfy certain requirements. To ensure products meet specifications, they may undergo various tests and inspections. Team members should progress through the quality assurance process and work closely with customers to ensure all requirements are satisfied. Hand-off requirements should also be defined.


ACTION PLAN



ANNING PROCESS



2.4

 Refer to the Organizational Effectiveness Toolset (CD): *Strategic Project Status Reporting Templates*

PERIODICALLY UPDATE PROJECT STATUS

Project Managers are responsible for keeping the Leadership Sponsor informed about the project. They do this through various status-reporting mechanisms, including project reports, updated GANTT Charts, and project deliverables. Project Managers shall also ensure that all key stakeholders are kept informed of project progress.

2.5

CENTRALLY TRACK PROJECT PROGRESS

The Project Coordinator monitors the progress of all Strategic Projects underway within the command. Projects can be monitored through progress reports, direct contact with Project Managers, and day-to-day knowledge of the project effort. At times, activities in a Strategic Project may have to be coordinated due to dependencies or to ensure maximum synergy.

2.6

CONDUCT PERIODIC PROGRESS REVIEWS

On a periodic basis, usually monthly or quarterly, leaders should review Strategic Plan progress. The review may be in written form, but the most common method is to present progress reports in a review meeting.

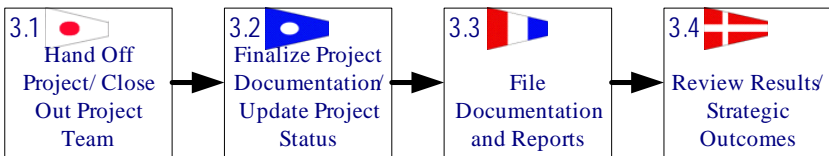
During review meetings, Project Managers should be ready with a three- to five-minute presentation to leaders. The presentation should explain the current situation, challenges and barriers to progress, and next steps. On occasion the executive team may include a short question-and-answer session at the end of the presentation. Midcourse corrections arising from the review session shall be incorporated into the next update to the Project Plan.

3.0 WRAP UP THE PROJECT

The goal project wrap-up is to deploy the project’s resulting product, service, or system to the customer or end-user and to close out the project. This process includes project review and assessment of the project management process.

At project wrap-up, a Project Manager is also responsible for completing other activities, such as archiving, technical and financial closure, demobilization, rewards and recognition, and conducting an after-action or lessons-learned analysis. The detailed sections below outline these activities.

DETAILED CHECKLIST		TOOLS
3.1	Hand Off Project/Close Out Project Team	
3.2	Finalize Project Documentation/Update Project Status	Project Status Reporting templates
3.3	File Documentation and Reports	CG Central
3.4	Review Results/Strategic Outcomes	Lessons Learned / After Action Reports



Wrap Up the Project



3.1

HAND OFF PROJECT/CLOSE OUT PROJECT TEAM


Project deliverables often result in new products or improved processes that must then be integrated into the existing organization. Part of the delivery mechanism includes a method to ensure this integration is smooth.

At a minimum, the product or process must be assigned to an individual role or function. This individual is in essence the *go-to* person or point of contact for that area of responsibility. It is in that individual’s best interest to become familiar with the product or process. The project team ensures this smooth transition.

3.2



FINALIZE DOCUMENTATION/UPDATE PROJECT STATUS

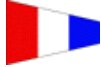
 Refer to the Organizational Effectiveness Toolset (CD):

Strategic Project Status Reporting templates

Upon closeout, the Project Manager and Command Project Coordinator shall ensure that the proper documentation has been completed; the process, product, or service has been handed off to the appropriate entity; and that all final instructions from the leaders have been carried out.

If the project consumed major portions of team members' time, supervisors may request input for the members' annual/periodic evaluations. The Project Manager must provide this information in whatever means is mutually agreed upon in advance.

3.3



FILE DOCUMENTATION AND REPORTS


 *CG Central* is a fantastic tool for collaborative team record keeping.

Project documentation, reports, and artifacts should be filed according to government requirements and project needs. Much of the material produced during a large project is valuable long after the Project Team is disbanded. The Project Team should plan for and create an indexed repository for documentation. Many times this repository is online, which will enable immediate recall when needed.

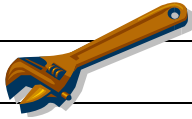
3.4




REVIEW RESULTS/STRATEGIC OUTCOMES







 Refer to the Organizational Effectiveness Toolset (CD): *Lessons Learned/Action Planning Review*

If the unit routinely manages work through a project methodology, it is recommended that an after-action or lessons-learned report be generated. Much can be learned from these large-scale efforts. Given the number of resources and time involved on many projects, it is incumbent upon leaders to study the effects the project had on the command's strategic outcomes.



USEFUL TOOLS

The following tools – templates, forms, worksheets, calculators, slide decks, facilitator notes, etc. – are included in the following references or on the accompanying compact disc .

Tool	Reference
Goal Worksheet (Strategic Planning Toolkit)	 Organizational Effectiveness Toolset
Strategic Project Abstract Template	 Organizational Effectiveness Toolset
Affinity Diagram Instruction	 Process Effectiveness Toolset (Also CG PIG Affinity Diagram)
Brainstorming	CG PIG
Team Charter Template	 Stakeholder Alignment Toolset
Tree Diagram	Memory Jogger Plus/II
Strategic Project Status Reporting Template	 Organizational Effectiveness Toolset
Lessons Learned Template	 Organizational Effectiveness Toolset



REFERENCES

INTERNAL USCG REFERENCES

U.S. Coast Guard. U.S. Coast Guard Process Improvement Guide (U.S. Coast Guard Quality Institute Staff, 2005).

EXTERNAL REFERENCES



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Bossidy, L., and Charan, R. Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done (Crown Business, 2002).

Project Management Body of Knowledge.

Noland, T., Goodstein, L., and Pfeiffer, J. Plan or Die (Pfeiffer & Co., 1993).

Kaplan, R., and Norton, D. The Strategy Focused Organization (Harvard Business School Press, 2000).

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Sheridan, B. Policy Deployment: The TQM Approach to Long-Range Planning (ASQC Quality Press, 1993).

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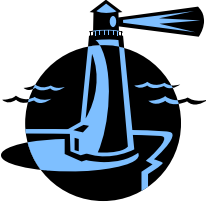


CCH Business Owner's Toolkit. <http://www.toolkit.cch.com>

The Daily Leader's Essential Toolkit. <http://www.linkageinc.com>

Curious Cat Management Improvement Connections.
<http://www.curiouscat.com>

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS



Although it is sometimes painful and may at times appear to be nonproductive, take the time to plan thoroughly. It will help set expectations, motivate execution, and facilitate communications.

Catch-ball: A technique involving the participation of Headquarters, field, and the various performance clusters to align strategic direction, performance targets, and action plans. Catch-ball is both a top-down and bottom-up exchange.

Leadership Sponsor: A member of the Leadership Team, usually in the Command Cadre at a Coast Guard unit or a Division or Branch Chief of a large unit or staff. The individual serves as the *linking pin* between leaders and the team executing the task or project.

Project Manager: The assigned leader of the Project Team. The Project Manager oversees all project activities and is responsible for execution of the team's charter and maintaining good communications with leaders and stakeholders.

Project Team: Members of the Project Team work closely with the Project Manager to execute the tasks assigned in the Team Charter or other directive. Although they normally do not report directly to the Project Manager, they are responsible for bringing their expertise and energy to the effort.

Resources: People, time, materials, and funding required to fully execute a project. Resource budgets are usually established at the beginning of a project and adjusted as need throughout the project life cycle.

Strategic Projects: Projects that, when successfully accomplished, contribute to achieving a defined strategic outcome or goal.

Strategies: Specific, quantifiable, assignable sets of actions or projects that lead to accomplishment of a goal over a specific period of time.

Tactics: Specific actions that can be assigned to an individual or team to accomplish over a short period of time. They:

- May be a task within a project;
- Should include the steps to be taken;
- Should include a completion date.



BALDRIGE FOCUS

How do you develop and deploy ACTION PLANS to achieve your key strategic objectives?

How do you allocate resources to ensure accomplishment of your ACTION PLANS?

How do you ensure that the key changes resulting from ACTION PLANS can be sustained?

How do you establish and deploy modified ACTION PLANS if circumstances require a shift in plans and rapid execution of new plans?

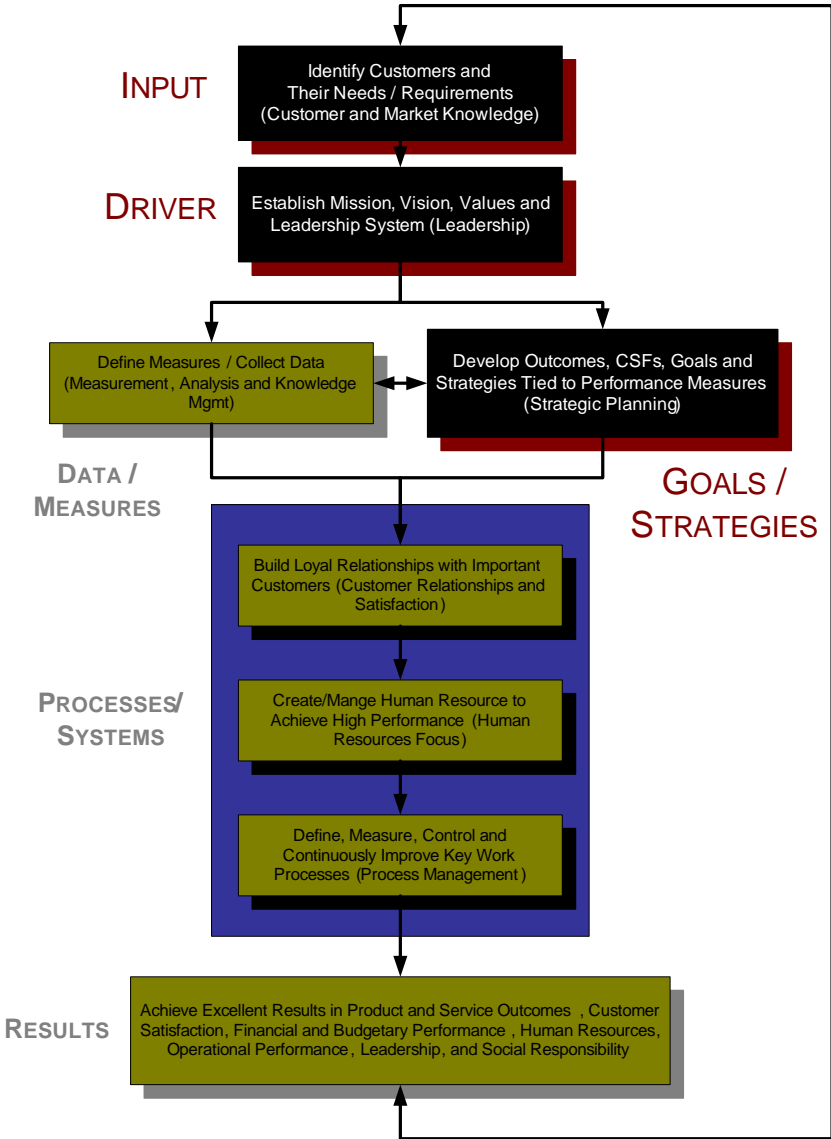
What are the key changes, if any, in your products and services; your customer and missions; and how you will operate?

What are your key human resource plans that derive from your short- and longer-term strategic objectives and ACTION PLANS?

What are your key performance measures or indicators for tracking progress on your ACTION PLANS?

The Strategic Planning Category examines how your organization develops strategic objectives and action plans. Also examined are how your chosen strategic objectives and action plans are deployed and how progress is measured.

BALDRIGE LINK



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