Quarterly Best Practices Summary

Office of the Chief Information Officer
Oct. 1 – Dec. 31, 2020

Table of Contents

To obtain this publication in alternative format, please contact the Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech) ADA coordinator, Chris Britton, at 360.407.8437 or via email at chris.britton@watech.wa.gov.

Executive Summary

The 2020 supplemental operating budget provides the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) funding for experienced information technology (IT) project managers to provide critical support to agency IT projects that are subject to gated funding project provisions. Per Section 149(1)(a) these project managers:

(i)   Provide master level project management guidance to agency IT stakeholders;

(ii)   Consider statewide best practices from the public and private sectors, independent review and analysis, vendor management, budget and timing quality assurance and other support of current or past IT projects in at least Washington state and share these with agency IT stakeholders and legislative fiscal staff at least quarterly, beginning July 1, 2020; and

(iii)   Beginning December 31, 2019, provide independent recommendations to legislative fiscal committees by December of each calendar year on oversight of IT projects.

This document is the third quarterly report required by section 149(1)(a)(iii) and includes the following:

- Key accomplishments for this report period of Oct. 1, 2020 through Dec. 31, 2020.

- The five best practices for this quarter.

  - Share IT project management best practices through a community of practice (CoP).

  - Use lessons learned to prevent repeating project failures while maximizing opportunities to implement good practices and processes on existing and future projects.

  - Provide a set of best practice-based project management processes and deliverables.

  - Develop a technology budget.

  - Partner with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) oversight consultants.

- Updated lessons learned repository and common themes for this reporting period.

- Expert Project Managers (rebranded to Project Management Partners (PMP)) bios.

- Previously shared best practices.

The OCIO team of project management partners have been supporting state agency gated funding information technology projects[1] since July 2019. **Appendix A**: Project Management Partners Team provides a profile of our project managers.

---

[1] Projects subject to the gated funding requirements of Section 701 of the 2020 supplemental operating budget or Section 701 of the 2019-21 transportation budget.

Key Accomplishments

Key accomplishments this reporting period.

- **Project management guidance.** PMPs spent over 700 hours working with individual state agencies, providing project management guidance to 36 gated funding projects representing 27 state agencies from October 1 through December 31, 2020. The following chart provides a view of project management partner engagement by quarter.

Agencies and Projects Served
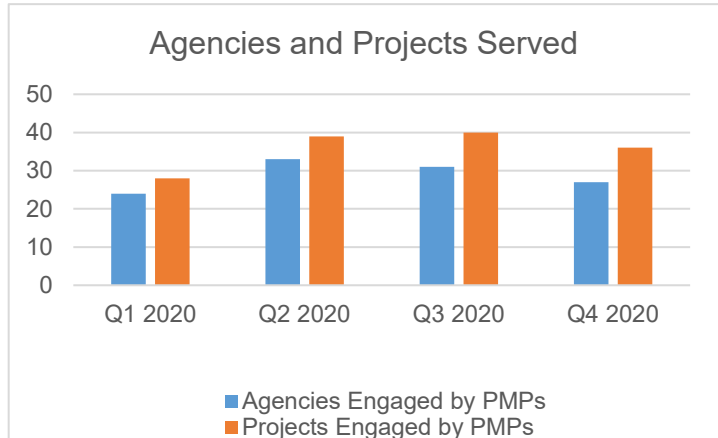
- **Risk management and mitigation.** OCIO assessed risk status was reduced from red to yellow or yellow to green for approximately 50% of gated funding projects engaged with master level project manager during this reporting period, this remains close to the target of 50%. The following chart provides a view for the year by quarter.

Project Assessed Risk Reduced with PMP Engagement
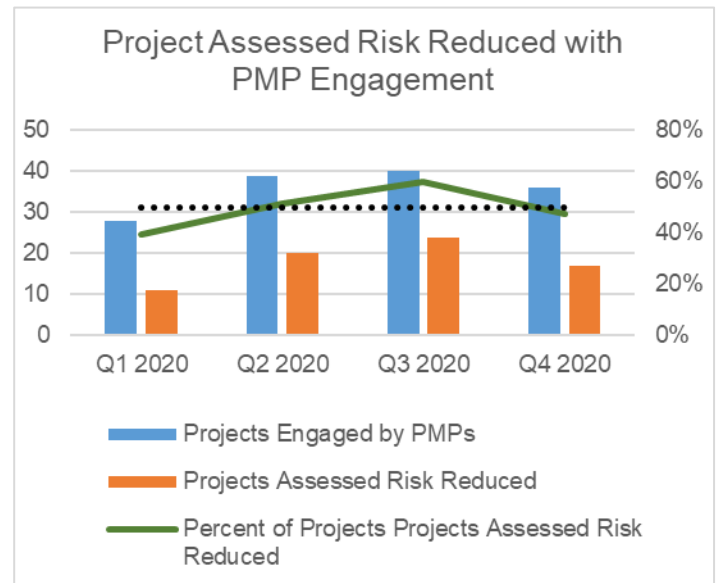
- **Statewide best practices**. Project management partners worked one-on-one with agency project teams to share industry best practices and lessons learned including:

  - Executive sponsorship and project governance.

  - Project management/project controls.

  - Scope management.

  - Project schedule planning and management.

  - Investment planning and management.

  - Technology budgeting.

  - Project team/human resource management.

  - Risk and issue management.

  - Procurement.

  - Contract and vendor management.

  - Implementation approach and methodology.

  - Organizational change management.

- **Positive impacts on state agency IT projects**. With support of the OCIO, the project management partners conducted a customer satisfaction survey this past quarter. Overall, executive sponsors and project teams reported project management partners are having positive impacts on their projects. The following highlights a few of the findings of the survey:

  o **Over 60%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "my master level project manager brought **valuable expertise and best practices** to my project."

  o Nearly 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "working with my master level project manager had a **positive impact on my project**."

  o Over 60% of respondents were **satisfied or very satisfied** "with the master level project manager services received."

  o **Over 65%** of respondents were likely or very likely to "seek master level project manager services on a future gated funding project."

  o Over 70% of respondents were likely or very likely to "**recommend master level project manager services** to another agency managing a gated funding project."

  Details of survey results are available in the 2020 Annual Oversight Recommendation report, to be published in early January 2021.

- **Best practices resources.** The project management partners worked closely with the OCIO to publish an online [Project Manager's Guidebook](#) in December 2020. This guidebook is a resource and toolkit to help business and technology project managers learn the basics of project management. It provides a step-by-step process for managing projects from initiation through closeout as well as the supporting templates to do so. It also includes selected best practice quick tips and process guides.

- **Project Management Community of Practice (CoP)**. The project management partners are working to develop a statewide community of practice (CoP) for state and agency project managers, to be launched in 2021. The CoP will facilitate discussion and the exchange of best practices and lessons learned among project managers as well as provide resources and a peer network of support.

Best Practices

Project management partners identified several opportunities to bring industry best practices to gated funding projects. Here are five of the key best practices for this quarter.

Note: Previously shared best practices are located in **Appendix B**.

1. Share IT project management best practices through a community of practice (CoP).

Washington state has over 90 active IT projects under OCIO oversight, with a combined estimated cost of $1.9 billion. These projects are complex, have a broad scope of impact and are expensive. In 2019 the legislature provided funding to the OCIO for experienced IT project managers in part to consider statewide best practices from the public and private sectors and share these with agency IT stakeholders. The project management partners are working with the OCIO to develop a statewide community of practice (CoP) for state and agency project managers, to be launched in 2021.

> A new organizational form is emerging that promises to complement existing structures and radically galvanize knowledge sharing, learning and change. It's called the community of practice.

The *Harvard Business Review* states, "A new organizational form is emerging that promises to complement existing structures and radically galvanize knowledge sharing, learning and change. It's called the community of practice."[2] A community of practice is a group of people who share a common interest or commitment to and passion about a particular topic. Its purpose is to develop members' capabilities and build and exchange knowledge and expertise.

The goals of the Washington state project management community of practice are:

- To create a valuable resource for all state agency project managers.
- To foster the meaningful and effective exchange of best practices and lessons learned.
- To help improve overall successful IT project delivery in Washington state.

Best practices for establishing a community of practice

Best practices for establishing a community of practice include:

1. **Have a clear objective or purpose in mind**.
2. **Bring the right people together**.
3. **Provide an infrastructure in which the CoP can thrive**.
4. **Appoint an administrator**.
5. **Establish a regular cadence for meetings and networking opportunities**.

---

[2] Wenger, Etienne C. and William M. Snyder. "Communities of Practice: The Organizational Frontier." *Harvard Business Review* (January-February 2000), https://hbr.org/2000/01/communities-of-practice-the-organizational-frontier.
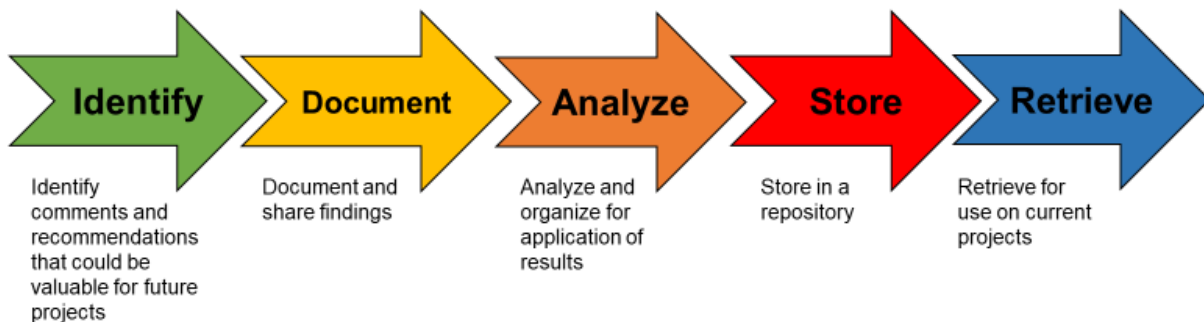
6. **Use social media platforms and online forums** to support peer networking, offer discussion forums and host real time, virtual meetings and panel discussions.

7. **Offer support and resources** to the community as it needs.

8. **Survey members** to identify topics for focused discussion and areas of improvement.

2. Use lessons learned to prevent repeating project failures while maximizing opportunities to implement good practices and processes on existing and future projects.

Project managers generally know the importance of capturing lessons learned. It is good for the team and the organization as well as existing and future projects. Lessons learned identify what went well, what didn't go well and why. Washington state IT projects under OCIO oversight are provided at least two opportunities to document lessons learned: 1) in the development of the post implementation report (PIR), and 2) the independent quality assurance (QA) lessons learned/closeout report.

> The goal of lessons learned is to use them to improve the successful delivery of future projects, by preventing similar issues and applying those processes and practices that worked well in similar situations.

The goal of lessons learned is to use them to improve the successful delivery of future projects, by preventing similar issues and applying those processes and practices that worked well in similar situations. The Project Management Institute (PMI) Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) Guide[3] lays out the following process to get to a place where lessons learned are effectively used.

Identify → **Document** → **Analyze** → **Store** → **Retrieve**

Identify comments and recommendations that could be valuable for future projects | Document and share findings | Analyze and organize for application of results | Store in a repository | Retrieve for use on current projects

This sounds simple enough, but for large organizations it's a bit more complicated. During 2020 the project management partners worked closely with the OCIO to publish an online IT Project Lessons Learned Repository. The project management partners reviewed recent post implementation reports and QA lessons learned and closeout reports, compiled lessons learned from working directly with state agencies and best practices derived from their collective knowledge and expertise. The project management partners maintain the lessons learned

---

[3] *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide) Sixth Edition)*. (Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute, Inc., 2017).

repository and update it quarterly. This repository will ultimately be supported via the online community of practice, to be launched in 2021.

Finally, projects don't have to be complete to gather lessons learned. Many projects conduct lessons learned periodically in order to make course corrections throughout the project lifecycle. Some implementation methodologies, such as agile, encourage lessons learned each iteration to increase efficiencies in the next iteration. Other projects conduct lessons learned sessions at the conclusion of key milestones or phases. The goal is to make incremental improvements while continuing what is working well for that project.

Best practices for using lessons learned

Best practices for using lessons learned include:

1. **Create a usable repository.** Identify data requirements such as project, date, challenge and lesson learned. Make it accessible and searchable. Consider search fields such as project type, phase and lesson learned category.

2. **Assign a person to manage the repository** and ensure it is regularly updated.

3. **Purge lessons learned that have outlived their usefulness.**

4. **Review the lessons learned repository prior to starting each new project.**

   - With project leadership, review applicable lessons learned and determine actions the project will take to apply lessons learned to the project.

   - Review applicable lessons learned as part of a project kickoff and discuss with the project team.

   - Use lessons learned as part of risk planning.

5. **Conduct lessons learned throughout the project and make course corrections as needed.** Keep a record of interim lessons learned for end of project closeout.

3. Provide a set of best practice-based project management processes and deliverables.

Most organizations, including Washington state, want structure and consistency in delivering IT projects without stifling the flexibility to meet the unique nature of some projects or creating unnecessary overhead or work. A project management guidebook that incorporates Washington's policies, guidelines and best practice processes, using Washington state terminology, provides business and technology managers a step-by step process for managing projects from initiation through closeout. In addition, providing standard templates provides consistency in deliverables and "jumping off" points for new project managers.

> A project management guidebook provides business and technology managers a step-by-step process for managing projects from initiation through closeout.

During 2020 the project management partners worked closely with the OCIO to publish an online Project Manager's Guidebook. Similar to the IT project lessons learned repository, this guidebook will be supported via the online community of practice, to be launched in 2021.

Best practices for using project management guides and templates

Best practices for using project management guides and templates include:

1. **Use the Project Manager's Guidebook as a toolkit.** It is intended to be flexible and scalable with the freedom to choose from the guide what best fits the project.

2. **Review templates** and include agency-specific processes and procedures regarding project management.

3. **Select the project management approach that incorporates best practices** but is flexible enough to accommodate the unique aspects of each project.

4. **Incorporate agency-specific needs and branding in the templates.** The templates are purposefully generic to allow agencies to customize and/or brand for the project.

4. Develop a technology budget.

At the core of project management is planning and monitoring the project scope, schedule, and budget. The project budget can be one of the most sensitive parts of a project. Most changes to scope or schedule will usually require a change of the planned project spend. Washington state agencies with projects identified under IT oversight in the operating and transportation budgets are required to have a technology budget. The goal of the technology budget is to provide transparency, accountability and financial controls to state investments.

> The goal of the technology budget is to provide transparency, accountability and financial controls to state investments.

Successful projects recognize and account for the resources they need at all stages of the project to ensure successful execution of their strategic plan. Washington state agencies use their technology budget document as a spending plan to fulfill this critical component. It is important to note that key areas including scope, schedule, and budget should closely align in both the investment plan and technology budget. Think of the technology budget as the outline of your project story and the investment plan as the narrative.

The process of developing a gated funding technology budget and getting approval from the authorizing environment can be onerous, so it's important to have the right information and people available to support the budget development.

Best practices for developing a technology budget

Best practices for developing a technology budget and navigating the approval process include:

1. **Review the Gated Funding resource material on the OCIO website** before completing the gated funding technology budget template. The website includes videos and FAQs as well as the latest templates.

2. **Understand the project requirements.** For example, know the project objectives, success criteria, estimated budget, timeline and how will it be delivered. A high-level plan provides an understanding of what resources are needed to deliver the project. These resources are represented as either Budgeted or Agency In-Kind and include labor, materials, equipment, and technology needed to complete the project activities and may include other indirect costs.

3. **Understand the contractual obligations for payment** of vendor services or delivery and constraints to consider for payment so that the spend plan is accurate. If the contract is not yet established, consider what you know about the work and the most likely payment structure, or divide the estimated contract maximum evenly between months of engagement.

4. **Aim high when estimating the cost of each resource.** It is better to come in slightly under budget than to run out of funding to pay essential resources.

5. **Identify the project deliverables and schedule.** Deliverables are the outputs of the project work and may include documents such as project management plans, reports, product development or service delivery milestones, and/or deliverable signoffs from vendor (design approvals, test report results). NOTE: The key to completing the deliverables tab is show the value the state is making in the investment for each gate.

6. **Plan gate timeframes and durations** around logical points in your project that delivers value for the planned spend. Try to keep the gate durations between three and nine months and the planned spend per gate about equal (understanding that sometimes one-time costs can inflate the planned spend for a gate). Avoid gates that include few deliverables and most of the planned spend.

7. **Include the OCIO Oversight Consultant and OFM Budget Assistant in your planning process.** Schedule regular check-in conversations to answer questions as they arise and streamline the approval process. Consider conducting a walkthrough of the final technology budget with all the right people to answer questions and make any final updates or decisions.

8. **Report budget to actuals** from the technology budget **and deliverable status** in status reports and explain variances in easy to understand terms. This will help stay on track and ease the gate certification pathway.

5. Partner with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) oversight consultants.

Washington state is investing over a billion dollars in information technology (IT) investments this biennium. Given this large investment, the authorizing environment requires accountability and transparency for all major IT investments. The Technology Services Board Policy 121 (IT Investments – Approval and Oversight) indicates that all major IT investments are subject to oversight of the Office of the Chief Information Officer. In addition, the biennial and supplemental operating and transportation budgets for 2019-21 include gated technology funding provisions which also require OCIO oversight. The goal of OCIO oversight is to "ensure the success and transparency of all business-driven major IT investment …" The oversight consultants and

project management partners want to build relationships with agency project managers, teams and sponsors. Our ultimate goal is to support projects to achieve their goals and help them deliver on their commitments.

Best practices for partnering with OCIO oversight consultants

Best practices for partnering with your oversight consultant include:

1. **Invite OCIO oversight into project initiation/planning.** Do this as early as business case or funding request development by using the [Information Technology Project Assessment Tool](#).

2. **Schedule time to check-in regularly on project progress, risks, and issues with your oversight consultant.** Separate check-ins for project manager, sponsor, and independent quality assurance is helpful to get a full understanding of the project status.

3. **Consult with your oversight consultant** on developing key oversight requirements such as technology budgets and investment plans.

4. **Establish early reviews and walkthroughs** for gated funding deliverables or artifacts.

5. **Leverage your oversight consultant** for escalating requests to WaTech or for engaging with other agencies on project dependencies.

6. **Use your oversight consultant to get clarification** on oversight policies for security, architecture or other areas.

7. **Be transparent with your oversight consultant** regarding project issues and risks.

Office of the Chief Information Officer

Lessons Learned

On July 2020, the project management partners in conjunction with the OCIO published an online repository of lessons learned from Washington state IT projects under OCIO oversight. It provides a tool for project managers to learn from the experiences of others to reduce project risk and reinforce positive outcomes. It is searchable by project type, project phase and category. Lessons learned categories include:

- Agency readiness.

- Communications and stakeholder management.

- Cost management.

- Executive sponsorship and governance.

- Implementation approach and methodology.

- Organizational change management.

- Procurement and contract and vendor management.

- Project management and project controls.

- Project team and human resource management.

- Schedule management.

- Scope management.

> This quarter:
>
> - One project under OCIO oversight was completed.
> - One project was cancelled.
> - Twenty-eight lessons learned and best practices were added to the repository.

The IT Project Lessons Learned Repository has been updated to include lessons learned compiled from October through December 2020. This quarter, one project completed and one was cancelled. Twenty-eight lessons learned and best practices were added to the repository.

The following table provides a sample of these newly added lessons learned in the categories of executive sponsorship and governance, implementation approach and methodology, organizational change management, project team and human resource management and schedule management.

Category	Lesson Learned
Executive sponsorship and governance	- Dedicate an executive to core project team when project and vendor management is complex.
Implementation approach and methodology	- Establish standards and clearly define what functionality decisions are at an enterprise level vs. what can be made at an organization level. - Provide real migrated data and integrations for user acceptance testing (UAT). - Work with organizations to clearly define expectations of UAT and what their testing must and should include. Include clear instructions on what sign-off of UAT means. - Educate organizations on key items that they will need to know in order to configure the system the way it needs to be configured. - Validate notifications during UAT.

Category	Lesson Learned
	• Start with base configuration and enterprise requirements for discovery, reduce complexity as much as possible, confirm scope is legislatively required. • Define development methodology (agile, daily demos with SMEs and developers, SMEs validate acceptance criteria and demo to product owner for approval), and make sure it will work for both vendor and agency as part of project planning and obtain formal signature. • Capture all user stories and a rough order of magnitude sizing estimate up front to assist in planning and reaction time if things don't go as planned.
Organizational change management	• Allow stakeholders to learn alongside the core project team. • Allow stakeholders access to the system as early as possible. • Provide clear expectations of what organizations need to do each month and tailor expectations to their needs. • Provide frequent, regularly scheduled open forums for stakeholders during implementation. • Provide a post go-live forum for users to raise questions and get answers. • Provide different types of training and allow organizations input into the timing of the training. • Plan to have operational teams reduce backlogs as much as possible prior to user acceptance testing phase of project. • Include both a command center for external customers as well as deskside support team for internal staff, and an escalation room for both, and dedicate training for them to match what they are supporting.
Procurement, contract and vendor management	• Ensure vendor has adequate staffing plan that includes allocation of named resources over time and identifies primary and secondary resources.
Project team and human resource management	• Plan for more resources, especially when dealing with aggressive schedules.
Schedule management	• Establish a fully resource loaded integrated schedule either prior to contract signature or as part of the acceptance criteria in the statement of work that both the state and vendor have to agree schedule is complete.

Appendix A: Project Management Partners

The OCIO currently has four master level project managers.

Richelle Glascock has been working with the state's smaller agencies to provide hands-on support to coach projects to set up a project management framework and navigate the gated funding process. She is a Project Management Institute (PMI) certified Project Management Professional (PMP) who brings to the team experience as both project manager and independent quality assurance on state IT projects.

Meet the project management partners:

- Richelle Glascock
- Shelley McDermott
- Megan Pilon
- Stacy Steck

Shelley McDermott holds a BA in business from The Evergreen State College and PMP certification from the PMI. Her background includes assessment and implementation of complex business initiatives, program and project leadership and strategic planning. Shelley excels at managing high-risk, high-visibility projects and leading teams and has successfully delivered results on both public and private sector organizations.

Megan Pilon is a master level project manager, PMI certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and a PMI Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP). Megan has over 30 years of information technology experience, 25 years working with Washington state agencies and 22 years in project management. She has extensive experience with Washington state high profile projects and understands what it takes to deliver IT projects. She has worked for the Legislature, the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and in private industry as a service delivery and consulting director.

Stacy Steck is a PMP and holds an MBA. She has served the state on several successful, long-term projects and brings more than 25 years of experience in the field of project and program management to this role. Stacy was a leader in the healthcare industry and had a leading role in implementing electronic health record systems. Additionally, she has a certification in enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution configuration and has implemented ERP modules (HR and Budgeting) as part of her consulting career.

Appendix B: Previously Shared Best Practices

The following table provides reference to the previously shared best practices and to the quarter it was reported.

Best Practice	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Setting up project governance structures.	✔		
Preparing for procurement.	✔		
Having a vendor manager review vendor's progress in meeting contractual obligations.	✔		
Establishing foundational project management.	✔		
Articulating a clear business case.		✔	
Establishing strong governance.		✔	
Selecting a right-fit project manager.		✔	
Managing organizational change.		✔	
Leading the go/no-go decision.		✔	
Conducting procurements that protect the state's investment.		✔	
Share IT project management best practices through a community of practice (CoP).			✔
Use lessons learned to prevent repeating project failures while maximizing opportunities to implement good practices and processes on existing and future projects.			✔
Provide a set of best practice-based project management processes and deliverables.			✔
Develop a technology budget.			✔
Partner with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) oversight consultants.			✔