



Washington State - Office of the

Chief Information Officer

Quarterly Best Practices Summary

Office of the Chief Information Officer
April 1, 2021

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Executive Summary

The [2020 supplemental operating budget](#) section 149(1)(a) 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. **Appendix A: Project Management Partners** provides a profile of OCIO master level project managers. This report:

- Summarizes key accomplishments from January 1, 2021 through March 31, 2021.
- Presents selected best practices shared with state agencies during this same reporting period.
- Highlights several new OCIO project management resources available to state agencies.
- Provides a summary of lessons learned shared by state agencies with IT projects that have completed since January 1, 2021.

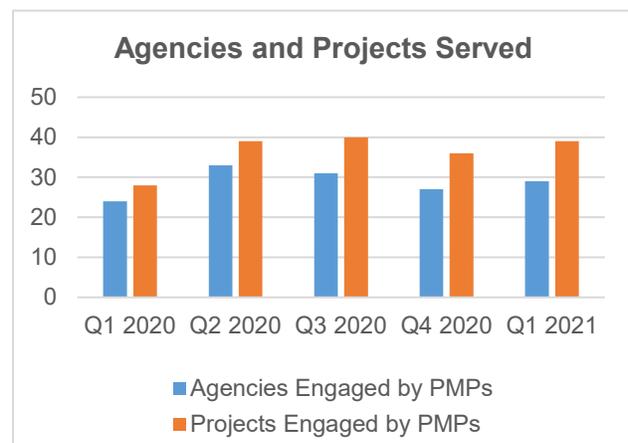
Key Accomplishments

Key accomplishments this reporting period include:

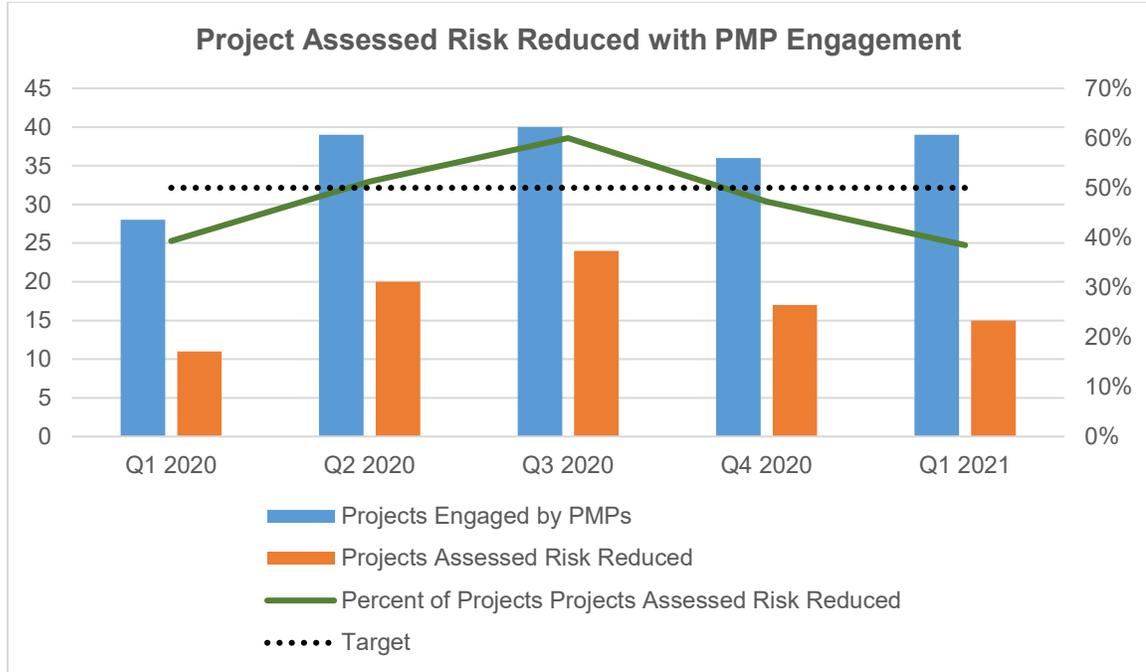
- **Project management (PM) Community of Practice (CoP) launched.** Project management partners launched a statewide community of practice for state agency project managers in February 2021 with its first event. This webinar [Project Management in a Virtual World](#) was recorded and is now available online. At the first event, there were approximately 80 attendees and 23 different agencies represented. The PM CoP is a way of moving from conceptual best practices to assisting agencies in putting them into practice. Monthly community of practice events have been scheduled for the remainder of 2021.

Project management partners launched a project management community of practice to facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned and provide a peer network of support.

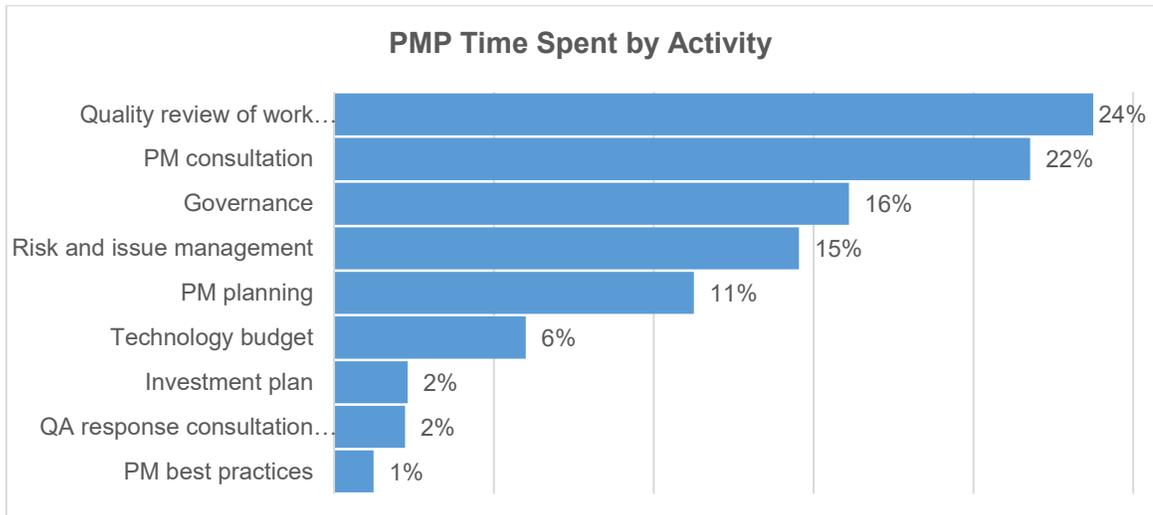
- **Project management guidance.** Project management partners spent over 700 hours working with individual state agencies, providing project management guidance to 39 gated funding projects representing 29 state agencies from January 1, 2021 through March 31, 2021. The chart to the right provides a view of project management partner engagement by quarter.



- Risk management and mitigation.** OCIO assessed risk status was reduced from red to yellow or yellow to green for approximately 40% of gated funding projects engaged with a project management partner during this reporting period, compared to approximately 50% during the October 1 to December 31, 2020 reporting period. The target is to reduce risk for 50% of the gated funding projects the project management partners are engaged with.



- **Statewide best practices.** Project management partners worked one-on-one with agency project teams to share industry best practices and lessons learned. The following chart demonstrates where time is being spent.



Best Practices

Project management partners identified several opportunities to bring industry best practices to gated funding projects including:

- Differentiate between a program and a project.
- Utilizing business analysts on projects.
- Effectively responding to quality assurance recommendations.

Differentiate program management from project management.

Programs are not merely big projects, they are different. The key difference is in the focus of the management effort. Project management is focused on creating a deliverable as efficiently as possible, program management is focused on maximizing the benefits realized by the organization.

Washington State has at least four large programs underway, One Washington, Workers' Compensation Systems Modernization, Long Term Support Services and Lab Information Management system. The focus of these programs is overall value to the state. For example, the One Washington initiative is a program comprised of multiple projects designed to create much greater value. The most visible part of One Washington is the implementation of Workday which is an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that will replace AFRS. But additional projects under the One Washington umbrella include organizational change management, the retirement of the Transportation Reporting and Accounting Information System (TRAINS) at Washington State Department of Transportation, designing the future support organization and legacy systems remediation or retirement.

Washington State has four "mega" programs underway. Focusing on value creation vs. speed is a key element of program management.

The One Washington program must align many of its subprojects so that the Workday solution can go live with all necessary subproject efforts completing at the same time. The OCIO has learned from similar programs at the University of Washington and Washington State University is that the legacy systems remediation effort is a frequent cause of schedule delays impacting the Workday solution timeline. Managing the program as a portfolio of highly aligned organizational transformation elements stands the best chance of crossing the finish line.

Key differences between project management versus program management

Project	Program
Focused on creating a deliverable as efficiently as possible.	Focused on maximizing the benefits to the organization; often a group of related projects managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits and control not available from managing them individually.
Avoid scope creep.	May contain elements of work outside of the scope of the discrete projects in the program.
Seek certainty.	Expect uncertainty.

Project	Program
Seeks to minimize unnecessary change.	Embraces changes to future work.
Seeks to encompass 100% of the work within the schedule.	Blends the project schedules at a summary level and manages the gaps and interfaces between the projects.
Department or agency level.	Multi-agency / enterprise.
Generally, one primary goal for the project to focus on delivering.	A series of projects each focusing on a particular goal.
Goal: on time and on budget.	Goal: "value" is the driver rather than budget.
Focus on producing the optimum deliverable.	Focus on integrating the deliverables into the organization's operations.

Best practices for program management include:

1. **Manage to the value vs. managing to the deliverable:** A program is like making a movie¹—the tools and techniques are well-known but the final outcome is uncertain. Only after completion can the results be measured and success or failure be determined. Most culture changes and marketing initiatives are in this category. The tools to be used, including training, communicating and advertising, are well known and the traditional mix of techniques is understood for most situations. What no one can predict is whether the public reject, accept or even acclaim the final result.

Traditional project management is not enough in these projects; there is a continual need to measure results, provide feedback information and adapt the mix of activities to optimize the likelihood of success. The key value measurement is attempting to answer the question "is it worth spending more or should we cut and run?" Efficient stakeholder communication and relationship management is crucial. While there will be some outstanding successes ("blockbusters") and some total flops, most projects and programs in this "making a movie" category finish somewhere in the middle. There is an art to spending just enough effort to achieve an acceptable outcome—dealing with shades of gray.

2. **Plan to manage with senior management and be a part of the organization's strategic business:** Program management is not a natural extension of project management. For most project managers it is a career change. Program managers are part of the organization's senior management team focused on the strategic delivery of value. Project managers manage technicians and subcontractors. Program managers manage project managers and collaborate with other senior managers.

While it is absolutely possible and often desirable to contract project management to an independent third party, it is virtually impossible to effectively contract out the program management role. The program manager must be an integral part of the organization's strategic business.

¹ Weaver, P. (2010). Understanding programs and projects—oh, there's a difference! Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2010—Asia Pacific, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute.

3. **Maintain alignment between subprojects:** In addition to proven strategies like inter-agency agreements, teams must meet often to harmonize work plans and deal with schedule conflicts and dependencies.
4. **Use lessons learned as part of risk planning:** One Washington is keeping in contact with other states that have deployed Workday at the enterprise level and learning from them. They are also staying in contact with other ERP initiatives in this state. They continue to mine the ERP projects at University of Washington and Washington State University for best practices and landmines.
5. **Create program governance:** A decision-making body for an entire program is best suited to program management. Subprojects may have independent or subordinate governance bodies, but a single body should be accountable for the enterprise alignment of all subprojects.
6. **Leverage the technology budget for alignment opportunities:** Fortunately, in Washington the state has a standard tool for agency budgeting for IT projects. Budget bills include line items for specific initiatives, and the technology budget reinforces the connections between related subprojects. The template requires that projects and programs to think about how much they are reliant on each other to be successful.

Utilizing business analysts on projects.

Business analysts bring a disciplined approach to creating and managing change within an organization.

While Business analysts (BAs) can be an important asset on projects, all too often agencies don't have the in-house talent or lack the bandwidth to take on every project. The following is an argument for planning to include BAs on all major projects throughout the life of the project.

BAs bring a disciplined approach to defining and managing change within an organization. They identify vulnerabilities and define needs based on feedback and stakeholder input. When they are included in the entire solution life cycle (business case through implementation) the BA can:

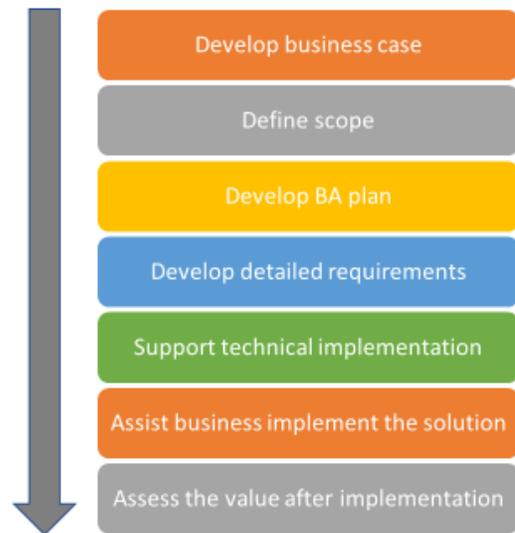
- Assist in articulating a clear business case.
- Develop and maintain detailed requirements to satisfy the business case and project objectives.
- Develop options for a solution and assess the pros and cons of each.
- Manage the requirements during the implementation.
- Translate business requirements to the technical team and follow up on questions to the business.
- Assist the quality assurance team by reviewing test plans and test cases meet requirements.
- Assist the organizational change management team by analyzing what changes the future state business process will introduce.
- Assist the training team with training design and curriculum creation.
- Assess the value created by the solution by comparing actual results to projected results.

In short, BAs identify business needs, recommend relevant solutions and elicit and manage requirements to ensure the solution satisfies the business needs. They bridge the gap between the business and technologists and engineers.

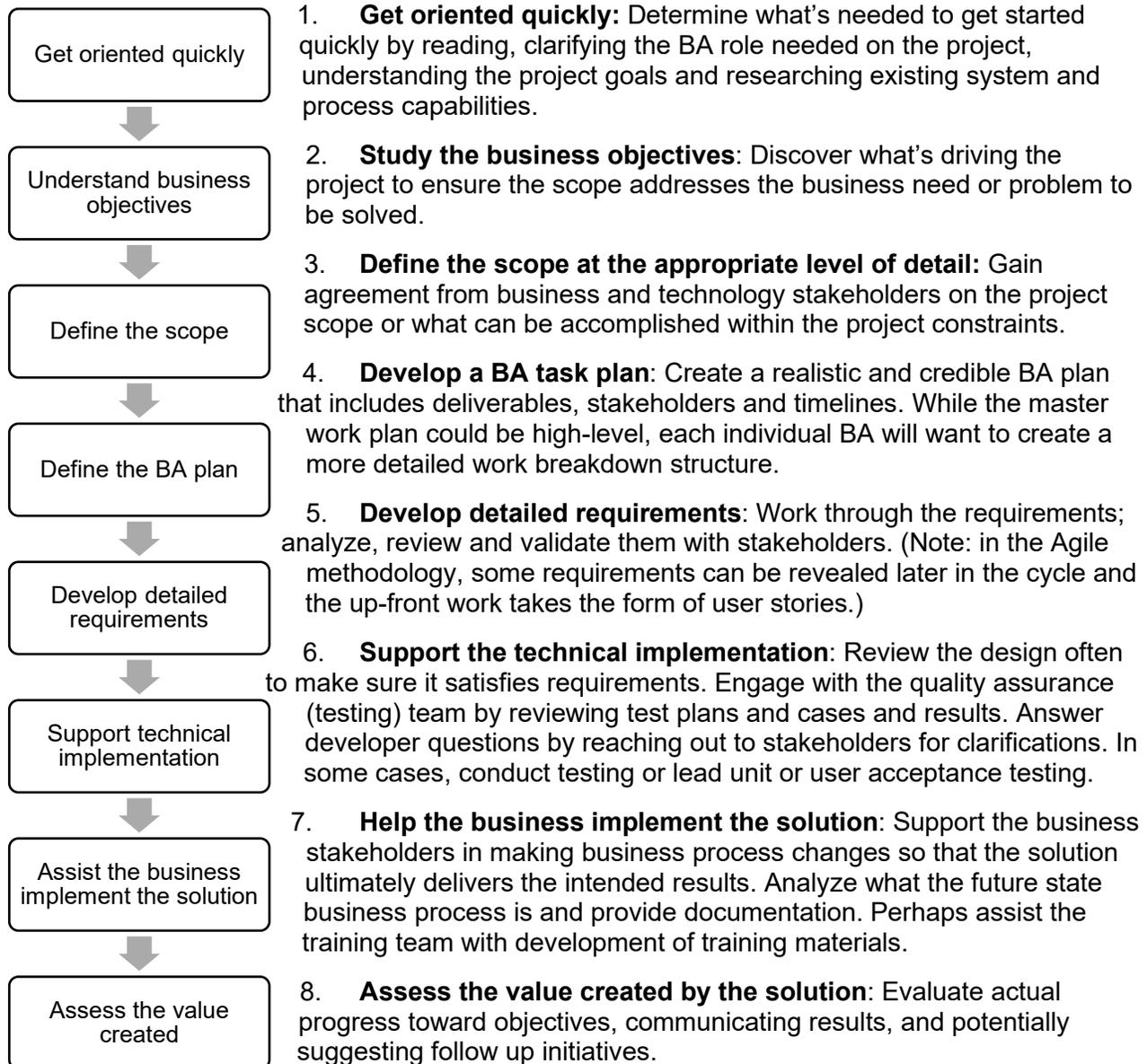
Well qualified BAs have both hard and soft skills. They need to know how to pull, analyze and report on data trends. They need to share that information with others and apply it to the business. Not all BAs need a background in IT as long as they have a general understanding of how systems, products and tools work. According to the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA), some of the most important skills and experience for a BA are:

- Verbal and written communication skills.
- Interpersonal and consultative skills.
- Facilitation skills.
- Organizational skills.
- Analytical thinking and problem solving.
- Knowledge of business structures.
- Understanding of networks, databases and other technologies.
- Ability to be detail-oriented and deliver a high level of accuracy.
- Ability to conduct stakeholder analysis.
- Ability to conduct requirements engineering.
- Ability to conduct cost benefit analysis.
- Ability to conduct process modeling.

Life cycle of the Business Analyst for IT Projects



Best practices for business analysts include:



In addition to the above, the project management partners encourage the following:

1. Include BAs in the development of technology budgets and project planning. A BA could be a project manager's best friend when it comes to details needed for a technology budget.
2. BA training is essential. Provide training to BAs if there are skillset gaps. Often when promoting from within a BA may not know the tips, tricks and shortcuts to developing key products. This training will pay for itself in project efficiencies.
3. In-house BAs can save time and money. Most agencies can keep a business analyst busy from now until forever. One common mistake we see is projects attempting to use

business unit subject matter experts (SMEs) as analysts. While there is overlap, they are not interchangeable.

4. Even Cloud or software as a service (SaaS) applications still need BAs to assess workflow changes, write test scripts and user stories, assist with testing and training.

Responding to QA findings and recommendations.

The objective of independent quality assurance (QA) is to provide projects with an unbiased perspective on project risk and the quality of its deliverables. A good QA provider will assess project status and develop recommendations to improve performance. Agency project managers are handling numerous priorities, and some have little time to respond to QA recommendations in a meaningful way. Still, taking the time to review, ponder and respond to QA recommendations is an essential best practice that all project managers should make time for.

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Best practices for responding to QA findings and recommendations include:

1. **Be brief and actionable:** Stakeholders are always interested in how an agency responds to its QA findings. In many cases, project managers don't provide a complete response, timely due dates or an updated status. QA responses should be similar to an action plan and briefly provide the who, what and when. The action plan approach is meant to help project managers to estimate work effort, reduce risk, limit repeat recommendations (month over month) and achieve project objectives.
2. **Negotiate disagreements with QA and sponsor:** It's ok to disagree with QA. Sometimes a project manager, sponsor or business owner will disagree with a finding or recommendation and project managers should be ready to review quickly and negotiate any necessary adjustments. Challenging QA to think about things differently or providing them with additional information can make a difference in overall project status and may prevent repetition in subsequent reports.
3. **Provide feedback to your QA team:** Ensure that they feel comfortable raising difficult issues. Ask your QA provider if they are holding anything back. QA should be providing you with recommendations that challenge you to make improvements, inspire you to think "out of the box" and respond to findings with confidence.
4. **Work to remove repeated recommendations:** Repetition is tedious. Writing responses can be tedious if QA recommendations remain the same month after month. If this is occurring, ask yourself and those around you why the same findings and recommendations persist. Work with your OCIO consultant or project management partner for a fresh perspective and ask for advice on your agency's responses.
5. **Meet regularly with your QA team:** Engage these subject matter experts in dialogue about what they're seeing and learning from interactions with project stakeholders, project team members and executives. Ask for recommendations in real-time and

respond to them immediately when possible. Doing so will potentially head off new or repeat findings and recommendations

OCIO Project Management Resources for Agencies

The project management partners and the Office of the Chief Information Officer have made available new resources to the Washington state project management community. A few selected resources are highlighted below:

Introducing the IT project management community of practice. The big news in the first quarter (Q1) of calendar year (CY) 2021 is the debut of the IT project management community of practice (CoP) sponsored by the Deputy Director of Strategy & Management and Assistant Director, OCIO. The first professional development webinar, “[Project Management in a Virtual World](#)” broadcast via Microsoft Teams on February 24, 2021. It provided a framework for virtual project management with tools and techniques gradually increasing in complexity and sophistication. Office of the Secretary of State VoteWA project manager, Tim Graden, presented a case study of the virtual project management competencies developed for the VoteWA Elections Modernization Project. An estimated 80 project managers representing 23 agencies joined the call and engaged actively in the conversation.

An advisory board is planned for Q2, comprised of project managers across the state who have a passion for the subject and want to play a steering role in the topics presented and the additional services and products that will be made available. The charter calls for an expansion of the CoP during Q2 to include: a Teams collaboration site, moderated panel discussions, workshops, discussion boards, newsletters, the IT project management lessons learned repository and useful resource links.

Ultimately, the goal of the CoP is to catalyze project success in Washington by crowd-sourcing innovative solutions, sharing wisdom and experience and elevating project management skills. The intent is to encourage the sharing of lessons learned and best practices via the CoP.

The topic for April 21 is change enablement. Organizational change management (OCM) is becoming a standard element of project management – a core competency that all PMs must have. More formal, structured events are scheduled bi-monthly in 2021 and the topics for June, August, October and December are being finalized. The intervening months will be less structured discussion and peer networking events.

Project management guidebook and templates. The OCIO published the project management [guidebook](#) and [templates](#) late last year and plans to continue to update, add templates and content on its website. These deep repositories of knowledge will continue to evolve and grow over the next two years.

Lessons learned. Last year 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.

Lessons Learned

The [IT Project Lessons Learned Repository](#) has been updated to include lessons learned compiled from January through March 2021. This quarter, one project under OCIO oversight was completed and two other projects conducted mini lessons learned sessions. Eight additional 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 procurement/contract & vendor management, cost management and project management/project controls.

Category	Lesson Learned
Procurement/Contract & Vendor Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include deliverable expectation documents (DEDs) as part of deliverable review process. • Ensure all team members understand what is expected in each of the sections of the DED (for instance what is expected in purpose and objectives and how will those be used). Make sure that language that is going to be used over and over in the DEDs is agreed to, otherwise the same comments will be made by reviewers. Make sure acceptance criteria is meaningful and satisfies contract/SOW as well as objectives of the deliverable.
Cost Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add contingency into project cost estimates to cover unexpected increases in costs to resources.
Project Management/Project Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide project managers, even on smaller size projects, assistance in navigating unexpected complexities and completing project efficiently.

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.

Shelley McDermott is a master level project manager with a BA in business from 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.

Project Management Partners:

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

Appendix B: Previously Shared Best Practices

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

Best Practice	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	CoP
Set up project governance structures.	✓				
Prepare for procurement.	✓				
Have a vendor manager review vendor's progress in meeting contractual obligations.	✓				
Establish foundational project management.	✓				
Articulate a clear business case.		✓			
Establish strong governance.		✓			
Select a right-fit project manager.		✓			
Manage organizational change.		✓			
Lead the go/no-go decision.		✓			
Conduct procurements that protect the state's investment.		✓			
Share IT project management best practices through a community of practice.			✓		
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.			✓		
Differentiate program management from project management.				✓	
Use business analysts throughout a project initiative.				✓	
Respond to QA findings and recommendations.				✓	
Optimize project management in a virtual world.					✓