

Frequently Asked Questions

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) provide responses to general questions specific to the Stage 1 Business Analysis replaces the former Information Technology (IT) Project Concept Statement. The Stage 1 Business Analyses will be used to generate the annual Statewide IT Capital Plan (refer to SIMM 57), which represents the Executive Branch's plan for IT investments in support of the California IT Strategic Plan.

Background

The California Department of Technology (Department of Technology) is restructuring the Information Technology (IT) project approval process to improve the quality, value and likelihood of success for technology projects being undertaken by the State of California. The Project Approval Lifecycle is intended to ensure projects are undertaken with clear business objectives, accurate costs and realistic schedules. Through SIMM Section 19, California adopted a new Project Approval Lifecycle which introduces a Stage/Gate Model specifically tailored for IT projects. The Stage/Gate Model divides the Project Approval Lifecycle into stages, separated by gates. Each stage consists of a set of prescribed, cross-functional, and parallel activities to develop deliverables used as the inputs for the next gate. The gates provide a series of “go/no go” decision points that request only the necessary and known information needed to make sound decisions for that particular point in time. As additional information is collected and refined through the lifecycle, cost estimates, schedules and business objectives will be progressively evaluated to determine if the project is still practical and if the investment should continue.

The Project Approval Lifecycle is intended to:

- Improve efficiencies through performing systematic and strategic analysis without compromising due diligence in carrying out California's IT policies and processes.
- Ensure each step and work product in the life cycle is operationally reusable in subsequent steps.
- Ensure decision points request only the necessary and appropriate level of detail of information needed to make a sound decision, estimate, or product for that particular stage.
- Ensure that a “no” or a “go back and re-think” decision is communicated sooner if the level of detail provided is inadequate.
- Ultimately result in more successful projects.

SIMM Section 19A, Stage 1 Business Analysis, is the first stage of the Project Approval Lifecycle and provides a basis for project management, program management, executive management, and state-level control agencies to understand and agree on business problems or opportunities, and the objectives to address them. Stage 1 Business Analysis is being released independently and ahead of the other stages to focus on building a strong business case. Additional Stages/Gates will be subsequently released to address the remaining aspects of the Project Approval Lifecycle including alternatives analysis, procurement and solution analysis.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Q. Why does the Department of Technology ask for Stage 1 Business Analyses (formerly known as IT Concept Statements) on “proposals” that are perceived as “non-reportable?” This appears to be in conflict with the definition of a delegated project.**

A. A “proposal” is defined as a request for a new project. A proposal is initially submitted as a Stage 1 Business Analysis which goes through due diligence to identify the program background, strategic alignment, business drivers, business problems, opportunities and measurable objectives. The Stage 1 Business Analysis captures the intent of the project giving the sponsor, project manager, customer, and stakeholders a starting point for initiating a project. The Stage 1 Business Analysis does not collect cost or end date. Therefore, Agencies/state entities¹ are required to submit a Stage 1 Business Analysis for all proposals prior to conducting a feasibility study, regardless of delegated cost thresholds.
- 2. Q. What is the purpose of the Stage 1 Business Analysis?**

A. The Stage 1 Business Analysis places an emphasis on business needs and strategic assessment. By focusing on business needs and strategic assessment, the Department of Technology plans to ensure successful technology governance, which depends on statewide planning processes that integrate strategic business planning into technology planning. This revision is intended to reduce the risk of project failure by making the process more systematic and strategic in how projects are planned.
- 3. Q. Must Agencies and state entities wait until the Stage 1 Business Analysis review process is complete before developing FSRs for projects?**

A. Yes. Per SIMM 19A, Stage 1 Business Analysis must be submitted for review and decision by the Department of Technology. Feasibility studies should not begin until approval is provided, in writing, by the Department of Technology.
- 4. Q. When are Stage 1 Business Analyses due to the Department of Technology?**

A. According to SIMM Section 05A, Stage 1 Business Analyses are due to the Department of Technology annually in October.
- 5. Q. How can an Agency/state entity withdraw or update a previously submitted Stage 1 Business Analysis?**

A. Please refer to the Information Technology Capital Plan (ITCP) Preparation Instructions, SIMM 57 for further information on this topic.

¹ **State entity:** Includes every state office, officer, department, division, bureau, board, and commission, including Constitutional Officers. “State entity” does not include the University of California, California State University, the State Compensation Insurance Fund, the Legislature, or the Legislative Data Center in the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 6. Q. Will the new process reduce the time to get a decision on Stage 1 Business Analysis?**
- A. It is anticipated that the Department of Technology will still render final decisions by the end of the first quarter of each calendar year.
- 7. Q. Our Agency/state entity has already begun using the IT Concept Toolkit; do we have to start all over with the new Stage 1 Business Analysis form?**
- A. The IT Concept Toolkit will no longer be accepted after the Technology Letter is released in August 2013. All submissions after release of the Technology Letter must use the new Stage 1 Business Analysis form.
- 8. Q. What benefits can we expect to receive from the revision of the Project Approval Lifecycle?**
- A. The Project Approval Lifecycle process will help Agencies/state entities focus on identification of the business need and on measurable objectives to ensure the project's successful outcome. To that end, the benefits would likely include more realistic and accurate cost and schedule estimates, along with a streamlined process which could eliminate the time writing Special Project Reports.
- 9. Q. Many Agencies/state entities are unfamiliar with the new process and how it will work. Will the Department of Technology provide resources or training?**
- A: Training for Agencies/state entities developing Stage 1 Business Analyses will be available in August and September 2013. A recorded session will be posted to the Department of Technology's website for future reference.
- 10. Q. Once subsequent stages are rolled out, will there be changes made to the Stage 1 Business Analysis to accommodate new discoveries?**
- A. It is possible that the roll-out of subsequent stages will result in refinements to the Stage 1 Business Analysis.
- 11. Q. What happens when the Department of Technology does not approve my Stage 1 Business Analysis?**
- A. The Department of Technology will inform the Agency/state entity of the reason for non-approval and what items are required for an approval upon resubmission (e.g., elaboration of business case). After obtaining written agreement from your Agency Information Officer, please refer to SIMM Section 57 and/or contact your ITPOC Manager regarding the process for reconsideration.
- 12. Q. Who is the audience for our approved Stage 1 Business Analyses?**

Frequently Asked Questions

- A. The Stage 1 Business Analyses will be reviewed by your executives and the Department of Technology. The list of the approved Stage 1 Business Analyses will be posted on the Department of Technology's public website.

13. Q. Will the project approval lifecycle revision effort provide an opportunity to suggest changes to the existing State budget cycle?

- A. No changes to the State budget cycle are currently being considered as the effort underway is limited to the Stage 1 Business Analysis. However, as additional stages are developed and released there may be changes to the process to submit budget change proposals related to IT projects. These changes will be made within the confines of the existing State budget cycle.

14. Q. What decision criteria are used in the review of Stage 1 Business Analyses?

- A. The Department of Technology will use the Gate 1 Business Analysis Evaluation Criteria and the Gate 1 Business Analysis Criteria Scorecard to record their decisions; both documents are available in SIMM Section 19A.

15. Q. Will the Department of Technology indicate if there is the potential for a Financial Information System for California (FI\$Cal) exemption requirement as a part of the Stage 1 Business Analysis?

- A. Agencies/state entities should indicate if their Stage 1 Business Analysis will require a FI\$Cal exemption request. Please refer to [Budget Letter 08-05](#) for information pertaining to the FI\$Cal exemption request process.

16. Q. I want to use the Microsoft InfoPath® form to complete the Stage 1 Business Analysis; what version of Microsoft Office do I need?

- A. InfoPath® is included as a standard component in the most frequently installed versions of the Microsoft Office® suite, as noted below. Although it is commonly installed on workstations, sometimes InfoPath® is not enabled. If InfoPath® is not visible, you may need to contact your desktop support. They can best inform you on how InfoPath® fits into your organizations' desktop standards and the steps to enable it. For reference, following are the Microsoft versions:
- InfoPath® 2003 – Office® 2003 Professional; Professional Enterprise
 - InfoPath® 2007 – Office® 2007 Ultimate; Professional Plus; Enterprise
 - InfoPath® 2010 – Office® 2010 Professional Plus; Office 365
 - InfoPath® 2013 – Office® 2013 Professional Plus; Office 365