QA Guide for Project Plans

This job aid supports managers who have been asked to review or approve a Project Plan. For each section of the Project Plan, it suggests quality considerations and key questions to pose to the authors.

Section	Questions	Your Notes
Purpose This section should provide the purpose of the document. This Project Plan should describe what work the project will do, what results will be achieved, and how project work will be executed and managed. It should describe team roles and responsibilities and deliverables. It should identify assumptions, constraints, dependencies, risks, and issues, and provide a high level schedule and budget information.	• Does the purpose statement match the expected purpose of a project plan? • Does the Project Plan overall meet the purpose described in this section?	
Background This section describes the problem or opportunity the project seeks to address using factual information. Examples of the types of factual information relevant to problems or opportunities are as follows: • Change in legislation requires action. • Current technology is outdated and not meeting needs. • Service levels are low, resulting in frequent customer complaints.	• Does this section make it clear why this project is important? • What would happen if this project was not undertaken? • If a Project Definition Document was written, is the content in this section consistent with the Problem/ Opportunity section?	
Goal and Objectives This section lists one project goal and several project objectives. The project goal is a clear, concise statement of the project's purpose and desired results. Project objectives are concise statements of what the project must achieve to realize the project goal. Objectives can be thought of as "sub-goals." Example: The goal of this project is to reduce traffic accidents. This goal will be achieved if the following three objectives are achieved: 1. Increase public awareness and knowledge of how to drive safely. 2. Pass new stricter laws for speeding and seatbelts. 3. Assign more police to enforce new stricter laws.	• Is the goal statement clear? • Is the goal aligned with the agency's strategy? • If a Project Definition Document was written, is the content consistent with the goal and objectives provided in that document? • Does the agency have the capability to do the work described? If not, are qualified vendors readily available?	

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Scope This section summarizes the scope of the proposed project by providing a list of key activities and deliverables. This section may also include a list of things the team will not be doing.	• Is it clear to you what work the project team will be doing? • If a Project Definition Document was written, is the content in this section consistent with the Scope section of this document? • Do you see a clear logical connection between the work described here and the goal and objectives of the project?	
Assumptions and Constraints Assumptions are factors outside the scope of the project that could affect its success, and which the authors of this document believe to be true. Examples are as follows: • Another project will be completed on time. • Appropriate resources will be available to work on the project. Constraints are factors that restrict the project team's options. Examples are as follows: • Time or budget restrictions. • Required adherence to specific standards.	• Can you confirm that the assumptions and constraints are accurate? • Are there other assumptions and constraints you can identify?	
Deliverables This section should provide each deliverable name and a brief description to provide a shared understanding of what is being produced. A deliverable is a tangible item that must be produced to complete the project. This can include generic project management deliverables – such as weekly status reports – as well as items specific to the project.	• Are deliverable descriptions clear? "Reports" can be 100 page word documents or 10 slide PowerPoint decks. Do you know what the team will be producing? • If the team is making recommendations, are they also implementing those recommendations, or will that require another project? If they are not implementing recommendations, will they be providing an Implementation Plan as one of their deliverables?	

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Stakeholders This section lists project stakeholders, or people with an interest in or influence over project work and results. This section also indicates how stakeholders will be impacted by the project and how they will be engaged. Examples of key stakeholders are as follows: • Decision-makers: People with authority and decision-making power over the project. • Influencers: People who influence and advise decision-makers. • End users: People who will use the end product of the project.	• If a Project Definition Document was written, is the content in this section consistent with the Stakeholder section of that document? • Are any key stakeholder groups missing from the listing provided? Note that a Stakeholder Checklist is available at www.qnpm.com. • Do the impacts described for each stakeholder seem realistic, or are these overstated or understated? • Do stakeholders who are significantly impacted by the project have a sufficient role in the project? Not e that guidelines are provided in the Zone of Reason job aid at www.qnpm.com.	
Outcomes / Success Measures This section provides statements about the impact the project must have on those outside the project to be considered successful. These statements should be consistent with the project goal and provide more information on measurable project outcomes. Examples are as follows: • Reduced number of traffic accidents. • Lower program costs. • Higher levels of customer satisfaction. • Improved literacy rates.	• If a Project Definition Document was written, is the content in this section consistent with the Outcomes / Success Measures section of that document? • Are the outcomes listed clearly linked to the project goal and objectives? • Do the outcomes listed seem to be likely results of the activities and deliverables listed in the Scope section? • When the outcomes will be achieved? During the project or after its completion? • Who will measure and prove the achievement of outcomes? Is this work in scope for the project team? • Note: this section should not repeat project deliverables, but instead list the impact of project work on others.	
Budget Summary Use the table below to give a high level view of project costs as detailed in your Project Budget, which should be included as an Appendix to this Project Plan. Below the table, list the financial assumptions made during the development of the budget and sources of financial information.	• How does the cost of this project compare with similar projects you are aware of? • Are government salary costs included? • Are the cost assumptions provided?	

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Human Resource Plan This section describes the roles and responsibilities of the project team, provides their start and finishes dates, and provides an organizational chart.	• Are role descriptions clear? • Do resources (if known to reviewer) known to have a relevant skill set? This is especially important if timelines do not allow for learning curve or include training. • If names are not provided, is it likely that available resources can be identified to undertake work at the level of effort outlined in the plan and schedule?	
Schedule Summary This section names project milestones and provides their dates. Milestones are significant dates on a project that typically mark the end of a project phase, the completion of a major deliverable, or a major project decision. Milestones are generally used as checkpoints during the project to indicate status, and they are often used to get approval to continue to the next phase of work.	• The Project Schedule should be included as an appendix to the Plan. Can you see the milestones listed in this section of the Project Plan clearly in the Schedule? • Do the milestones listed reflect key approvals and decision points for the project? • Are these approvals and decision points at times when the Sponsor and/or Steering Committee can meet to provide the required approvals and decisions?	
External Dependencies This section lists the inbound and outbound external dependencies for the project. "Inbound dependencies" are items the project team requires to continue its work but that are being completed by resources outside of the project team. "Outbound dependencies" are items the project team is producing that others need outside the project. All external dependencies are listed below.	• Do you know of any inbound or outbound dependencies that are missing?	
Risks This section lists project risks. Risks are something that may or may not happen in the future that could have an impact on the project.	• Are the top causes of project failure are taken into account: ? These include executive support, organizational support. user involvement , available resources, experienced project manager, formal methodologies available to follow, reliable estimates for time and cost. • Do the recommended actions for risks appear likely to be effective in reducing the likelihood or impact of each risk?	
Issues This section lists project issues. Issues are things currently happening that require resolution for the project to proceed successfully.	• Is it clear how issues will be managed? • Do you know of any issues that are missing?	