

Providing Quality Assurance for Information Technology Projects

Purpose: Establish the Quality Assurance (QA) requirements for Information Technology projects. Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V) is not considered part of this policy.

Effective Date: October 1, 2011

See Also: [Appendix A: Principles of Quality Assurance](#)

POLICY STATEMENT

- 1. Agencies shall use QA to ensure that IT projects are conducted in a disciplined, well-managed, and consistent manner that promotes the delivery of quality products completed on time, within budget, and that supports the business requirements of the agency.**
- 2. Agencies shall do the following to obtain Quality Assurance Services:**
 - 2.1. Contract with an external Quality Assurance Practitioner for all Level 3 Projects.
 - 2.2. Use an Internal or External Quality Assurance Practitioner for all Level 2 Projects.
 - 2.3. Consider the use of an External Quality Assurance Practitioner to provide analysis and input to the Feasibility Study, if the project is or is likely to be a Level 3.
 - 2.4. Engage QA Practitioners that have recent professional experience assessing information technology (IT) projects of similar or greater size, risk, and complexity when compared to the project being undertaken.
 - 2.5. Engage QA services with sufficient time to review and make recommendations regarding the acquisition process and contents of the project acquisition document(s).
 - If not using an acquisition process (for example, an internal development project), engage QA services prior to submitting the project investment plan to the agency's OCIO Senior Policy & IT Consultant.
 - 2.6. Retain the services of a QA Practitioner throughout the life of the project through development of post-implementation documentation.
 - Extension of the project schedule is not a valid reason for not having a QA Practitioner.
 - 2.7. Invite the OCIO Senior Policy & IT Consultant to participate and provide input during the QA Practitioner selection and acquisition process.
 - 2.8. Provide the QA Practitioner access to all aspects of the project, including but not limited to project personnel, documentation, meetings, and other resources.
 - This access shall be in a manner consistent with the ISB Security Policy and Standard as well as agency security policies for proprietary or sensitive information.
 - 2.9. Ensure the QA Practitioner develops and presents a Quality Assurance Plan to the agency for formal acceptance.
 - 2.10. Maintain a separate line in the project budget for Quality Assurance services expenditures.

- 3. Agencies shall not use the services of a QA Practitioner on any project where the QA Practitioner is, or has been used, on any non-QA activities for the same project.**
- 4. The QA Practitioner shall report directly to the Executive Sponsor and work with all members of the project team.**
 - Work with the project team includes providing informal recommendations and professional advice. The project team includes, but is not limited to key staff such as the project director, project manager, business sponsor, and others.
- 5. Quality Assurance reports shall contain the following:**
 - 5.1. A cover letter signed by the QA Practitioner responsible for the content that attests to the independent preparation of the report.
 - 5.2. A executive summary that describes:
 - The QA Practitioner's brief assessment of the project.
 - A summary of any findings, recommendations, and significant risks contained in the detailed portion of the QA report.
 - The agency's response to any findings, recommendations, and significant risks.
 - A listing of any findings the agency has not addressed or has not resolved by the due date.
 - 5.3. Sections that include detailed descriptions of the information included in the executive summary.
 - 5.4. A table that summarizes all open findings as well as those closed during the reporting period, including the QA Practitioner's assessment of the agency's actions.
 - 5.5. Address the Project Phase(s) in process and potential risks to subsequent phases.
- 6. At the end of each Project Phase, the Quality Assurance report shall include a Phase Readiness Assessment.**
 - The purpose of this review is to determine if the project is ready to proceed to the next phase.
- 7. For Level 3 Projects, the QA Practitioner shall attend and be prepared to present at all Technology Services Board (TSB) meetings when the project is on the agenda. If an agency is required by the TSB to present a post-project report, the QA Practitioner shall attend the TSB meeting.**
- 8. For Level 3 projects, the agency and QA Practitioner shall brief the OCIO Senior Policy & IT Consultant on the contents of the Quality Assurance report and Phase Readiness Assessment before the reports are finalized.**
- 9. When requested, the QA Practitioner shall brief the Authorizing Entity regarding project status and the Phase Readiness Assessment. The Executive Sponsor shall be notified of the briefing request and given the opportunity to attend.**
- 10. The QA Practitioner shall submit finalized Quality Assurance reports directly to the Executive Sponsor, other project staff as directed by the Executive Sponsor, and the OCIO Senior Policy & IT Consultant.**
 - 10.1. The finalized Quality Assurance reports are due monthly, unless the Authorizing Entity approves a longer interval.
 - 10.2. At the direction of the Authorizing Entity, the QA Practitioner may be required to submit written reports more frequently than the stipulated reporting cycle.

11. Agencies shall respond in the following manner to Quality Assurance reports:

- 11.1. Develop a documented response to each of the QA Practitioner's finding(s).
- 11.2. The agency's response shall include actions the project will take regarding each QA finding, or if the agency elects to take no action, the agency must state so in the response.
- 11.3. Make the response available to the QA Practitioner and the OCIO Senior Policy & IT Consultant.
- 11.4. Provide its response to the QA Practitioner's finding(s) in sufficient time to be included in the next scheduled Quality Assurance report and for Phase Readiness Assessments.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Chief Information Officer (or designee)

- Interpret the policy.
- Ensure policy content is kept current.
- Recommend updates to this policy and related resources as needed.
- Review agency projects for compliance with the policy.
- Help agencies understand how to comply with the policy.

Technology Services Board (TSB)

- Review and approve major policy changes.
- Provide oversight of major IT projects.

Agency Heads

- Oversee agency's information technology projects and compliance with this policy.
- Ensure agency policies, procedures and any other documents necessary for required oversight of IT projects are developed and followed.
- Ensure staff is trained to follow QA policies.
- Ensure Quality Assurance Practitioners and their products are in alignment with the policy.
- Respond appropriately to the QA reports.

Quality Assurance Practitioners

- Provide QA services, reports, and briefings in alignment with the policy.
- Report directly to the Executive Sponsor and work with all members of the project team.
- Attend Technology Services Board meetings as required.

DEFINITIONS

Authorizing Entity: the Chief Information Officer (CIO) or the Technology Services Board (TSB).

Business Sponsor: the executive or manager responsible to the agency for delivery of business functionality. May also be referred to as the Sponsor.

Executive Sponsor: the senior executive responsible to the agency for the project. The project may have more than one Executive Sponsor.

External Quality Assurance Practitioner: an organization or individual whose services are acquired by the agency via an acquisition process (RFP, RFQ, RFQQ) or from a prequalified vendor list.

Finding: QA Practitioner’s assessment of the project’s use of project management best practices, as well as their assessment of deficiencies or gaps that may have an adverse impact on the project. A Finding may be either positive or negative.

Internal Quality Assurance Practitioner: a Washington State government organization or employee who provides independent QA services. An Internal QA Practitioner’s services may be acquired via an interagency agreement.

Level 3 Project: a project subject to ISB oversight as determined by any of the following three methods: the Severity/Risk Matrix; escalation to the ISB by the DIS Director; subject to section 902 of the Operating Budget (ESHB 1244, Chapter 564 Laws of 2009) or section 601 of the Transportation Budget (ESSB 5352, Chapter 470 Laws of 2009).

Level 2 Project: a project subject to DIS oversight as determined by the Severity/Risk Matrix.

Level 1 Project: a project that is not subject to either ISB or DIS oversight as determined above. The agencies are responsible to provide oversight for their respective Level 1 Projects.

Milestone: a significant check point, event, or deliverable in the project.

Phase Readiness Assessment: an evaluation and accompanying report that documents whether the project is ready to proceed to the next phase.

Project Phase: one of the four basic phases of a project (a project can have more than four phases and may overlap; Monitoring and Controlling occurs throughout the project and is not considered a separate “phase” for the purpose of this standard):

- Initiation
- Planning
- Execution
- Closeout

(For additional information, refer to the Project Management Institute or the Project Management Framework.)

Quality Assurance (QA): a discipline to ensure that project management standards, processes, and procedures are appropriate and correctly implemented to increase the probability of a project’s success. Quality Assurance is a systematic approach that monitors, evaluates, and provides interactive feedback about a project’s activities and ensures that the project is properly managed.

Quality Assurance Plan: a document that describes how the QA Practitioner will deliver its services.

Recommendation: the QA Practitioner’s suggested course of action to address a negative Finding.

Senior Policy & IT Consultant: an employee of the OCIO who is responsible for providing project management oversight and determining compliance with statewide IT policies.

RELATED LAWS AND OTHER RESOURCES

[Managing Information Technology Projects Policy \(131\)](#)

[Managing Information Technology Portfolios Policy \(112\)](#)

[Project Management Framework](#)

[Washington State Technology Projects Lessons Learned](#)

[Project Management Body of Knowledge \(PMBOK\) Guide – Fourth Edition](#)

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Action taken
October 2011	Policy reformatted for migration to Office of Chief Information Officer. Combines QA Standard 305-S1 with QA Policy 305-P1 into one document.
April 2010	Policy adopted, superseding 303-R1

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about this policy, please contact your OCIO Information Technology Consultant.

APPROVING AUTHORITY

Chief Information Officer
Chair, Technology Services Board

Date