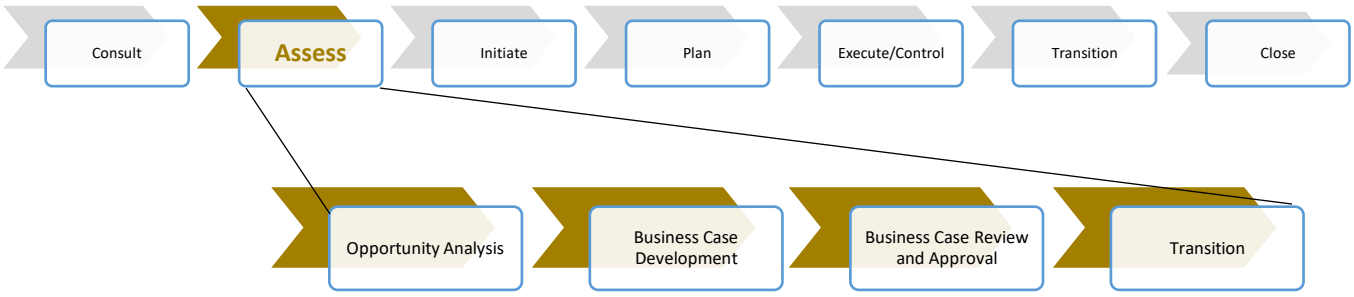
PM Methodology
Overview – Assess Phase



Goal	• **Evaluate ideas and determine whether to assess**	• **Build business case and validate with stakeholders**	• **Final business review (as required by business area)** • **Confirm readiness** • **Present project for final approval**	• **Transition project to team that will see project through delivery**
Key End of Phase Deliverable	• **Opportunity Analysis**	• **Business Case** • **Project Estimate** • **Risk Profile**	• **Business Case** • **Project Estimate** • **Risk Profile**	

Phase Overview

During the Assess Phase, a problem or opportunity is defined in enough detail to establish the case for change and clearly define the need for the investment. Phase deliverables capture proposed investment decisions in a strategic context and provides the organization information necessary to make an informed decision about whether to proceed with the project investment and in what form. The outcome of the Assess Phase is a decision whether to move forward with the project and how it will be funded.

- *Identify work effort meets the criteria /definition of a project.*
- *Contact the PMO Delivery Leaders for more information or to discuss the best course of action for a proposed project.*
- *Visit the Project & Portfolio Management Intranet site for deliverable templates and job aids that support the Assess Phase.*
- *Visit the People Change Management Method on the PPM Intranet Site for guidance on assessing the change and the impact of the change*

Phase Detail

1. Opportunity Analysis

Objective: Assess an idea to determine if it warrants moving forward to build the detailed business case.

a) In some cases, rather than going directly into business case development, it is appropriate to do a higher level assessment to gain a better understanding of the problem or opportunity.
b) Business leadership in the sponsoring organization determines whether the idea is declined or deferred, or whether it moves on for further assessment and business case development.

2. Business Case Development

a) Prepare for Assessment

Objective: Position the assessment for success.

- Understand Project Sponsor and Business Owner expectations
- Define resources needed for the assessment
- Collect information that has been defined to date
- Define stakeholders (Finance, IT, etc.) that will be involved in the assessment, determine how they will be engaged, and set expectations
- Develop assessment plan and timeline
- Review phase deliverables to understand what is required
- Review approval and funding process
- Determine where to capture the assessment documentation
- Kick off the assessment

b) Define Problem/Opportunity and Desired Outcome

Objective: Establish the case for change and clearly define the need for investment.

- The first step is to identify the need (problem or opportunity) and the desired outcome. Due consideration should be given to the broader organization context, which includes the current business environment, strategic business goals, and drivers for change. Relating the investment proposal to strategic goals will help clearly define the business need and, ultimately, demonstrate the value of the investment to the organization.

- The following key questions should be assessed.
  - *Where are we now?* Describes the current unit's environment.
  - *Where do we want to be?* Describes the unit objectives.
  - *What is the business need?* Describes the problem or opportunity facing the unit or university.
  - *What has triggered the need for change?* Describes the drivers for change.
  - *What are we trying to achieve?* Describes the unit's desired outcomes.
  - *What is the strategic fit?* Describes how the proposed investment maps to the corporate and university strategy.

- *What are the high level requirements?* Defines the key requirements to address the unit's need.
- *What are the assumptions, constraints and dependencies?* Defines the assumptions, constraints and dependencies that need to be taken into account.
- *What is the scope of effort that is needed?* Defines the boundaries – what is in scope and out of scope.
- *How ready are we to take on this change?* Defines who is impacted and how ready we are for the change (organizationally, capacity, financially, etc.).

c) Analyze Options

Objective: Identify and analyze the options to demonstrate due diligence in the selection of the recommended solution.

- Preliminary Options Analysis
  - *Evaluation Criteria*: Define the evaluation criteria that will be used for screening and analysis of the options and, ultimately, determining an overall recommendation.
  - *Possible Options*: Define the potential options for addressing the business need. Status Quo should be considered as an option.
  - *Screen the Options*: Assess how well each option meets the evaluation criteria. Determine if the option should be considered for further analysis.

- Analyze Viable Options
  - *Alignment*: Look at each option to determine 1) how well the organization's strategy and goals will be met, and 2) to what degree the business outcome will be addressed and how the business outcome will be realized.
  - *Costs and Benefits*: Define the high-level estimate of the cost for developing each solution option, the ongoing costs for maintaining the solution, and the benefits that will be realized.
  - *Risks*: Understand the risks associated with each option and how they will be mitigated.
  - *Advantages and Disadvantages:* Compile and analyze the results, identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each.

- Justification and Recommendation
  - *Comparison:* Show how each option is compared against the standardized set of criteria.
  - *Recommended Option:* Business owner and key stakeholder identify the recommended solution.

d) Define Recommended Option

Objective: Further define the recommended option for solving the business need so that the business case has enough detail to allow an investment decision.

- *Proof of Concept:* Determine whether a proof of concept is needed to test the feasibility of the business solution.
- *Components:* Define business components required to achieve the solution.
- *Stakeholder Assessment*: Identify who will be impacted by the change that will be introduced and how they will be impacted.
- *Stakeholder & Organizational Readiness*: Assess how ready the organization is to take on this change.
- *Resources*: Identify the types of resources that will be required for this project and estimate the effort required.
- *Timeline*: Estimate the timeline for developing and rolling out.
- *Cost*: Estimate the cost to develop and maintain.
- *Benefits*: Estimate the benefits, tangible and intangible, that will be realized a result of the project.
- *Risk:* Identify the business and execution risks associated with this effort

e) Finalize Business Case Deliverables and Gain Initial Sign-off

Objective: Prepare the business case documents for approval and gain sign-off to proceed.

- Conduct final confirmation with Finance, IT and other key stakeholders that there is understanding and alignment on the business case.
- Gain initial sign off on the business case from the Project Sponsor and Business Owner.

3. Business Case Review and Approval

a) Business Case Review

- Understand what the area's requirements are and determine how to align with other required or recommended reviews to ensure value in each.

b) Confirm Readiness

- The readiness review is to confirm that all key stakeholders are aligned with the business case and that they are ready to take on this effort from a resource and organizational change perspective.
- Key stakeholders that are involved in developing the solution or impacted by the change must be part of this review.
- The normal business case documents are used for this review.
- Results should be sent confirming commitment and readiness, and identifying any follow-up steps required before moving on for final approval.

c) Final Sign-off

- Gain final sign-off on the business case documents from the Project Sponsor and the Business Owner.
- This sign-off indicates their commitment to the project, including ownership of the scope, risk, cost and benefits.

d) Final Approval

- Gain final approval of the project and approval of funding from the appropriate approval body
- Document and communicate decision (e.g. approval, decline, defer).

4. Transition

- Conduct Post Assessment Review (PAR) to identify best practices and lessons learned, and share suggestions that might prove helpful in future assessments.
- Clean up assessment documentation so that it can be easily transitioned to the delivery team or referenced at a later date.

Transition the approved project to the delivery team (if different) that will be managing the project execution.