

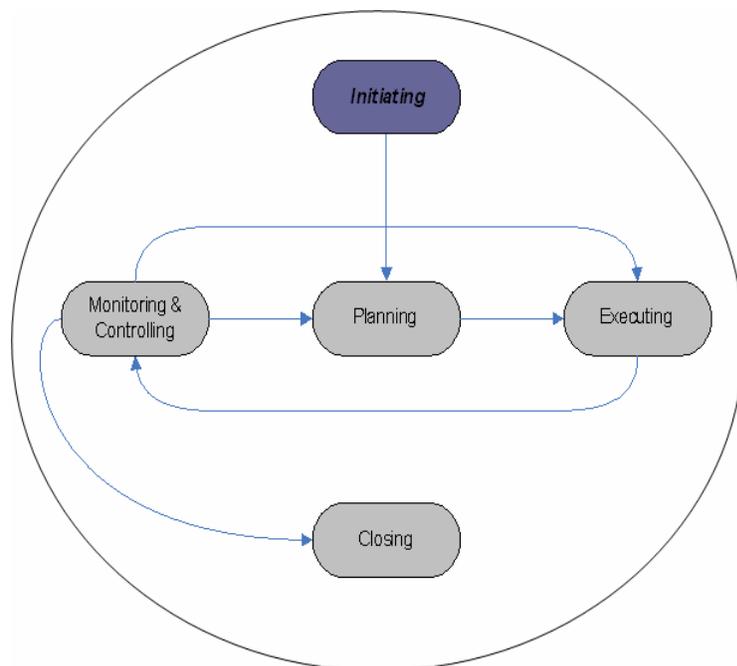
## 2.1 Initiation Phase Overview

The Project Initiation Phase is the conceptualization of the project. This section describes the basic processes that must be performed to get a project started.

Accordingly, the purpose of the Project Initiation Phase is to specify what the project should accomplish. The caution in this purpose is if the customer's needs are inadequately articulated, then poorly formulated goals and objectives will stand out as a significant source of concern. This starting point is critical because it is essential for those who will deliver the product/process, for those who will use that product/process, and for those who have a stake in the project to reach agreement on its initiation.

Shown below in Figure 2.1.1 are the relationships between the various project phases. The Initiation Phase is the first project phase and is the predecessor to project planning. Activities conducted during the Initiation Phase will eventually be integrated into the various planning documents and will drive planning elements such as schedule and budget.

**Figure 2.1.1**  
**Project Management Initiation Phase**



**Elements of the  
Initiation Phase**

Defined in this methodology section are general guidelines to assist in defining the overall parameters of the project during the Initiation Phase. The sub-sections have been organized to be consistent with how a project might progress through the Initiation Phase.

It must be stressed that the recommended methods in this section are standard steps for project efforts, since it is here that agreement is reached on what the project's end product(s) will be. The basic processes for the Project Initiation Phase are:

- Creation of a Product Description Statement
- Development of Project Feasibility
- Development of a Project Concept Document
- Creation of Project Charter

**Creation of a Product Description Statement**

The Product Description Statement is an informal, high-level statement, contained within the Project Concept Document, which describes the characteristics of the product/process to be created. What purpose is the new product/process intended to serve and what brought about the need for the product/process? Typically, a Product Description Statement does not have a great deal of detail and will be used as a basis for building progressively more detailed descriptions within the Planning Phase.

**Development of Project Feasibility**

The determination of Project Feasibility plays an important part in the development of Initiation and Planning Phase Documentation. The determination can also be an abstract planning document without a formal template; however, its importance should not be overlooked. The purpose of this effort is to identify project constraints, alternatives, and related assumptions as they apply to the product/service to be developed.

Every caution should be taken to keep these activities at a high level in the organization so that they do not result in a project design.

There are four basic components to Project Feasibility:

- Business Problem Description
- Approach Overview to be used
- Potential Solutions of the problem
- Preliminary Recommendations

### **Development of a Project Concept Document**

A detailed description of this document and its contents is available in the Initiation Phase Section 2.2, entitled “Project Concept Document.”

The Project Concept Document should not be a collection of product or process deliverables, but it should define what is to be done, why it is to be done, and what business value it will provide when the project is completed.

***Figure 2.1.2***  
***Major Questions to Be Answered During the Initiation Phase***



### **Creation of a Project Charter**

The Project Charter, and its development, is discussed further within the Initiation Phase in Section 2.3, entitled “Project Charter.”

### **Potential Barriers to Project Initiation**

Some common barriers, such as indecision and hesitation, can be faced by Project Managers in the initiation phase. Examples of these barriers include:

- ***Project Team Frustration*** - The desire of the project staff to get the project moving and to start designing the solution never seems to come.
- ***Management Non-Commitment*** - There is a lack of full commitment on the part of management; usually, there is too little known with just presenting a “fuzzy” idea, and the project team cannot provide more than rough estimates for “how much and how long.”
- ***Customer Indecision*** - The customer seems unable to provide definitions and concepts of what the required product or service is to provide.

### **Problems During the Initiation Phase**

Many problems during the Initiation Phase lead to difficulty in getting a project moving forward. The most difficult commitments to obtain are from the key stakeholders (Senior Management) and customers. A summary of some of these problems is highlighted below:

- ***Scarcity of Resources*** - Many of the problems are related to assembling the initial project concept team. Locating the “right” people can be difficult, and this difficulty is compounded in more complex projects.
- ***Lack of Consensus on Project Objectives*** - It is not uncommon to find that there are many different ideas as to what the project should be

and what the project should produce. Concepts are often easier to integrate when the team is considering something concrete. Lack of objectives can kill a project before it starts.

- ***Lack of Management Sponsor/Support -*** Unfortunately the situation sometimes arises in which there is a recognized need for a project to be initiated; however, there is no one to champion the effort from an executive level. People may not support a project for a variety of reasons. This can be a huge issue should problems result later in the project. If additional funding or resources are needed and the management executives that control the funding are either not aware of or not interested in the project, then a project may fail. Senior management buy-in must happen at the project inception and be visible throughout the life of the project.

### **Project Initiation Responsibilities**

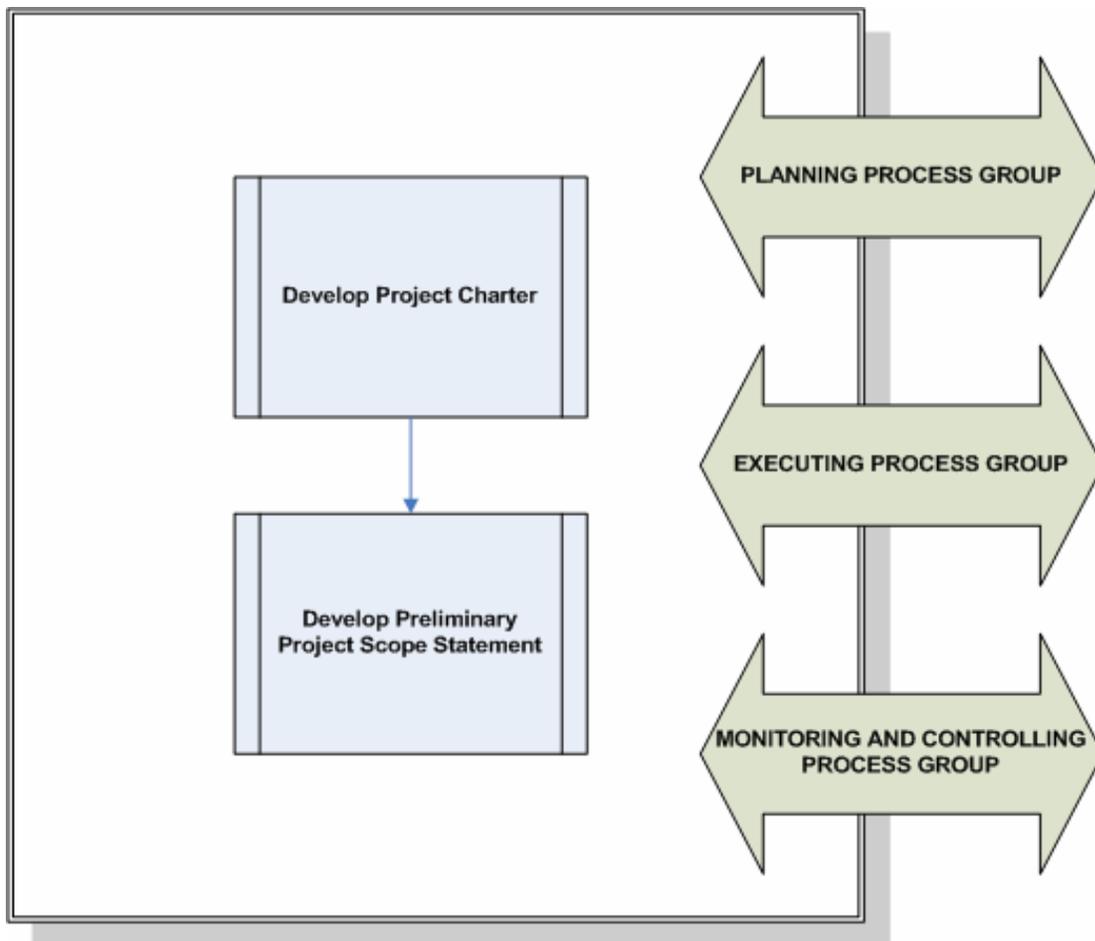
The Project Team is responsible for conducting customer, stakeholder, and fact-finding interviews. The team should hold research and brainstorming sessions to generate the information necessary for the Project Feasibility Document, the Project Concept Document and the Project Charter to be prepared. Project team members may also need to complete any ancillary Project Initiation materials.

## 2.2 Project Concept Document

While the Project Description Statement (part of the Project Concept Document) and Project Feasibility are key support elements in project implementation, the Project Concept Document is the foundation for making a decision to initiate.

Projects will vary in terms of complexity, but all should have some level of initial concept definition. For some projects, it may take only a few hours or days to complete this document; for others it could take months. This document is critical to guaranteeing buy-in for a project.

*Figure 2.2.1  
Relationships Among the Initiation Process*



### Elements of the Project Concept Document

One of the most important tasks in the Project Initiation Phase is the development of the Project Concept Document. To develop this document, the following should be identified:

- ***Project Manager*** - The Project Manager will define the project purpose, establish the critical success factors, gather strategic and background information, determine high-level planning data, and develop estimated budgets and schedules for the life of the project.
- ***Project Team*** - As appropriate, depending on the size of the effort, to perform the initial concept study.
- ***Concept Participants*** - Organizational entities and individuals that need to provide input to the Project Concept Document to clarify project direction.
- ***Stakeholders and Customers*** - Individuals and entities that could be actively or passively involved in the project and may be positively or negatively impacted as the project is completed.

During this stage of the Initiation Phase, the project team defines:

- Project goals and objectives
- High-level approach and project strategy
- High-level disaster recovery methodology
- Success factors for the project

The project team will also review information and conduct meetings. At this stage, items to be considered are the:

- Appropriate methods for application and deployment of technology

- Resource requirements

The *real issues* during the Initiation Phase are not the written documents, but the processes that occur to truly evaluate the appropriateness of a specific project and whether it can be started. The material generated as a by-product of these processes will be reviewed to make those business decisions.

The goal during this phase, and specifically with the Project Concept Document, is *not* to generate a 200 page document, but rather to provide a concise summary of information necessary to review and thus determine if the project should be initiated and carried into the Planning Phase.

### **Developing the Project Concept Document**

There are various methods for developing the needed concept information that the project team may wish to use, including:

- Brainstorming sessions
- Formal executive meetings
- Stakeholder or customer meetings
- Product Description Statement
- Project Feasibility determination
- Interviews with Subject Matter Experts

All of these methods should be aimed at defining the project at the highest conceptual level that provides the necessary responses to business needs and strategic objectives.

### **Timeframe for Completion**

The timeframe for a project team to complete the process to generate a Project Concept Document varies widely according to project size, and is driven by unlimited factors. Each project is unique and will require different levels of detail, research, and

development. Consideration should be given to all levels of review that may be required as well.

### **Project Concept Document Review**

There may be times when actual reviews need to be scheduled with the project team and external entities to review the Project Concept Document. These reviews would provide a forum for information exchange and would be timelier than written question and answer sessions.

The materials generated during the initial statement and analysis processes will drive the contents and structure of the meeting. Most likely a decision to proceed or not to proceed with the project will be a result of these meetings. If the Project Concept Document is agreed upon and accepted then the team should move to the next step of the Initiation Phase and create the Project Charter.

### **Project Concept Document Template**

A general format template can be found in the template section of this methodology. If it is necessary to create a Project Concept Statement other than the one furnished in the template, the statement should include the following general information categories. Use of the categories should result in a valid project concept definition.

- General Information
- Project Purpose
- Success Factors
- Strategic Background Information
- Financial Planning and Schedule Information
- Disaster recovery methodology
- Signatures

## 2.3 Project Charter

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A Project Charter is created to formally communicate the existence of the project. The Project Charter is issued during the Project Initiation Phase and is looked upon as the beginning of the Planning Phase of a project. It is used as the basis to create the Project Plan.

Inputs to developing the Project Charter are the Project Feasibility Document and the Project Concept Document. These documents identify a need and establish senior management commitment.

The Project Charter contains the following attributes within it:

- Project Scope
- Project Authority
- Critical Success Factors

### **Project Scope**

Project Scope is documented at a high-level in the Project Charter. The level documented must be sufficient to allow for further decomposition within the Project Plan. For example, the requirement for training may be identified within the Project Charter.

Decomposition within the Project Plan will document the types of training to be delivered, procurement or development of course materials, and so on. Project Objectives within the Project Charter are executed to meet the strategic goals of an agency or multiple agencies. Objectives are communicated in the Project Charter to ensure that all stakeholders understand the organization's needs that the project addresses.

Consequently, project objectives are used to establish performance goals – planned levels of accomplishment stated as measurable objectives that can be compared to actual results. Performance measures can be quantified to see if the project is meeting the agency's objectives.

Project performance can then be traced directly to the agency's goals, mission, and objectives; enabling participants to correct areas that are not meeting those objectives.

### **Project Authority**

Because of a project's complexity, many difficult decisions must be made to keep it on track. For this reason the Project Charter defines the authority and mechanisms to resolve potential problems. Three areas must be addressed:

- A level of management is required that can provide organizational resources to the project and have control over the elements that impact it.
- The Project Charter must establish a Project Manager who is given authority to plan, execute, and control the project.
- The Project Charter must establish a relationship between the project and senior management to ensure that a support mechanism exists to resolve issues outside the authority of the Project Manager.

### **Critical Success Factors**

To ensure the project progresses satisfactorily, Critical Success Factors or High-Level Milestones should be clearly defined with planned dates to measure progress. These can be used to approve the completion of a phase or milestone and as a go/no-go decision point to proceed with the project. These Critical Success Factors ensure that the products and services delivered meet the project objectives in the time frame established in the Project Charter.

### **Project Charter Template**

A general format template can be found in the template section of this methodology. The Project Charter is the major output from the Initiation Phase of the methodology.

Major sections of the Project Charter include:

- General Information
- Project Background
- Project Objective
- Project Scope
- Project Constraints
- Project Authority
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Critical Success Factors
- Disaster Recovery Methodology
- Signatures

The Project Charter is a collaborative effort, developed with the input of the Project Team. After establishing the Project Charter, the project team begins the process of devising and maintaining a workable scheme to accomplish the business needs that the project was undertaken to address.

## **2.4 Project Initiation Transition Checklist**

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In order to transition from the Initiation Phase to the Planning Phase of the project it is important to make sure that all of the necessary documents that are pertinent to the particular project in question have been completed. This sub-section discusses the process of insuring that the activities have been finished, reviewed, and signed off so that the project may move into the Planning Phase.

### **Usefulness of Project Checklists**

A good way to ensure that all start-up tasks are completed prior to actually starting the project is to develop a transition checklist. The checklist can be developed and then used by others to ensure that the tasks necessary to start the project are completed.

A Project Initiation Transition Checklist becomes a way for the Project Manager to organize and communicate tasks that should be completed prior to starting the project. For large projects, some of the start-up tasks could take as long as some of the initial planning steps.

Beyond serving as a communication document, use of the Transition Checklist can also trigger completion of tasks that the project team might overlook. The checklist is a combination of an action list and a tool to verify that necessary steps have been completed. The Transition Checklist should be organized according to the major areas of concern that will determine the project's success. The development and use of a Transition Checklist also provides the project team with the tools to ensure that all information has been reviewed and approved.

### **Project Initiation Transition Checklist Creation**

The Project Manager owns the Project Initiation Transition Checklist, although in most projects, the full team provides input.

**Format of a Project  
Initiation Transition  
Checklist**

The format of the Project Initiation Transition Checklist can be whatever the project team defines, but it usually resembles more of an outline than a dissertation. It could be a single line item with space provided for the person to list the current status of an item. Sample answers might be:

- Y = Item has been addressed and is completed.
- N = Item has not been addressed, and needs to be in order to complete the process.
- N/A = Item has not been addressed and is not related to this project.
- P = Item has been addressed and some issue resolution is needed to complete the item or annotate is as “N/A”.

If the item status information is modified, then the person responsible for the Transition Checklist should ensure that the information is given to the full project team for use. Each item on the Transition Checklist should also have an area for comments and should note plans to resolve “N” or “P” entries.

The project team can choose to put this checklist under configuration management or in the Project File Folder so that it may be shared. The format can be modified to the requirements of a particular project. A sample checklist can be found in the appendix.

## **2.5 Project Kick-off Meeting**

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The Project Kick-off meeting is the event that formally marks the beginning of the project. It is most likely the first opportunity for the Project Manager to assemble the entire Project Team to discuss his/her vision for the project, show support for the project, and advocate project success. Project Team members are introduced to each other and given the opportunity to discuss their areas of expertise and how they will contribute to the project. The Project Charter is presented by the Project Manager and discussed in an open forum, to foster a mutual understanding of and enthusiasm for the project. At the conclusion of the meeting, Project Team members will understand their “next steps,” and will leave the meeting ready and excited to begin work.

### **Conducting the Project Kick-off Meeting**

Prior to the meeting, an agenda and presentation highlighting the contents of the Project Charter should be prepared by the Project Manager. The Project Manager should designate one of the Project Team members as the scribe for the session, to capture notes and action items. The Project Charter and any applicable supporting materials are distributed to attendees for their review. The review of the charter contents ensures that expectations for the project and its results are in agreement. Following the session, the notes and action items should be compiled into meeting minutes and distributed to all attendees.

A sample Project Kick-off Meeting Agenda follows this page.

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| <b>Project Kick-off Meeting Agenda</b> |
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**Typical agenda items normally include:**

**Agenda:**

*Use the following suggested times as guidelines - the time you need to cover agenda topics will vary depending upon the needs of the project.*

| <b>Introductions</b>   | <b>Project Manager</b> | <b>5 minutes</b>  |
|--|------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Project Manager welcomes everyone and briefly states the objective of the meeting.</i>  |                        |                   |
| <i>Allow individuals to introduce themselves, and provide a description of their role within the organization and their area of expertise and how they may be able to contribute to the project efforts.</i> |                        |                   |
| <i>The material to be presented by the following agenda topics should come right from the Project Charter.</i>   |                        |                   |
| <b>Project Request &amp; Background</b>  | <b>Project Manager</b> | <b>5 minutes</b>  |
| <b>Project Goals &amp; Objectives</b>  | <b>Project Manager</b> | <b>10 minutes</b> |
| <b>Project Scope</b>   | <b>Project Manager</b> | <b>10 minutes</b> |
| <b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities</b>  | <b>Project Manager</b> | <b>10 minutes</b> |
| <i>When reviewing roles and responsibilities be explicit about expectations relative to stakeholder availability and Project Sponsor commitment and support for the project.</i>                             |                        |                   |
| <b>Next Steps</b>  | <b>Project Manager</b> | <b>5 minutes</b>  |
| <b>Questions</b>   |                        | <b>10 minutes</b> |

**Additional Information:**

*Provide a list of any handout material to be distributed to the attendees.*