Gateway review process

overview

Gate 0

Strategic assessment

Gate 0 involves a review of an entire program together with its constituent projects. It investigates the direction and planned outcomes of the program, together with the progress of its constituent projects. It can be repeated at key decision points throughout the life of the program. Gate 0 explores:

- why do we have to deliver this program and must it be done now?
- does the program deliver on organisational business strategy and high-level government policy objectives and initiatives?
- how does the program fit with other programs planned or underway (internal or external)?
- who are the main stakeholders and do we have their support?
- do we understand the scope and what will constitute success?
- are there realistic plans for achieving and evaluating the desired outcomes?
- how will we monitor progress and evaluate success?
- are stakeholders' expectations of the program realistic (such as referenced to outcomes, resource requirements, timetable and achievability)?
- have we identified the main program risks, including the track record of the agency, and made effective arrangements for managing them?
- are we confident that we have the right skills, leadership and capability to achieve success?
- can we afford the proposed program?
- are appropriate management controls in place?
- have provisions been made for financial and other resources required?
- have we engaged adequately with the market to identify delivery options?

Gate 1

Preliminary evaluation

Gate 1 focuses on the preliminary business case including details on the strategic importance of the project and its links to government and organisational policy and programs. Gate 1 explores:

- how does this project contribute to wider organisational and public sector strategies, within and outside the agency?
- does the preliminary business case clearly identify the business objectives and how they will be achieved?
- does the preliminary business case meet the needs of the business, is it affordable and achievable and will it deliver value for money?
- are the scope, scale and requirements realistic, clear and unambiguous?
- do we have internal and external authority and stakeholder support for the project?
- have the critical success factors and desired benefits been identified and agreed with stakeholders?
- have we explored a sufficient range of options to meet the business need and have the best options been selected for further investigation?
- have we identified major risks and do we have outline risk management plans?
- can we confirm our planning assumptions and are there plans for the project in place for the next stage?
- is there a clearly defined and agreed project management structure, with key roles and responsibilities identified?
- has market interest and capacity been considered?

Gate 2

Readiness for market

Gate 2 investigates the final business case and procurement strategy before any formal approaches are made to prospective suppliers or partners. Gate 2 explores:

- is the business case complete and robust and does it still meet the business need?
- are the requirements clear and unambiguous and are they aligned with the program to which the project contributes?
- are we being realistic about our ability to achieve a successful outcome?
- have we explored all relevant options to satisfy the requirement?
- is the recommended delivery strategy robust, legal and appropriate, with the right approach to development and implementation that is broken down into manageable components?
- is the project plan, through to completion, sufficiently detailed and realistic?
- do we have the right skills, capabilities and management expertise to ensure success?
- do we have adequate financial controls, funding and resourcing?
- can we confirm availability of funding for the whole project?
- do we have enough commercial expertise to understand the supplier market capability and track record?
- do we have adequate risk and issue management plans and procedures?

Gate 3

Investment decision

Gate 3 focuses on the updated final business case and confirms the project is still required, affordable and achievable. Gate 3 explores:

- can we confirm the final business case and benefits realisation plan has been updated now that we have relevant information from prospective suppliers?
- are the objectives of the project still aligned with those of its program and wider organisational and public sector strategies?
- is the recommended decision on delivery approach likely to deliver what we need on time and within budget, and will it provide value for money?
- have we followed the agreed procurement strategy and have we met all statutory and procedural requirements?
- do we have continuing stakeholder support for the project?
- do we have sound plans for managing implementation, risk and change and are they agreed across the supply chain?
- have we addressed the technical implications, such as buildability for construction projects, and information assurance for ICT-enabled projects?
- do we have the expertise and resources to manage the supplier relationship and are appropriate management controls in place?
- have we agreed draft contracts and service level agreements?

Gate 4

Readiness for service

Gate 4 focuses on the readiness of the agency to transition from project delivery to the live environment. Gate 4 explores:

- is the final business case still valid and unaffected by internal or external events or changes?
- can we confirm the benefits realisation plan is likely to be achieved?
- are commercial and legal arrangements with the supplier up to date?
- can we confirm that our plans for managing implementation, roll out and operation are achievable and that we have the resources we need?
- are management controls in place to manage the project through to operation?
- do we have shared plans for managing risk, with contingency and business continuity plans in place?
- has full user and system testing and commissioning been done to our satisfaction so that we can approve full implementation and roll out?
- is the business ready to implement the business change with the necessary resources in place?
- do we have plans for managing the working relationship with clients, including a documented agreement on how the contract will be managed by us and the supplier?
- are lessons for future projects identified and recorded correctly?

Gate 5

Benefits realisation

Gate 5 confirms the desired benefits of the project are being achieved and business changes are operating smoothly. This review can be repeated at regular intervals during the lifetime of the new service or facility. Gate 5 explores:

- was the business case justification for the project at Gate 3: Investment decision realistic and are the expected benefits actually being delivered?
- have we undertaken a post implementation review or equivalent review of business benefits?
- do we have enough skills and resources to manage the contract/service level agreement (SLA) successfully and with continuity of key personnel?
- if we have made agreed changes, can we be sure that they do not compromise any requirements of the procurement approach adopted (such as change of scope)?
- is there still a business need for this contract or SLA? If circumstances have changed, is the service delivery approach and contract adapting to the new situation?
- are we actively seeking to improve value for money and performance?
- are we ready for the future, with plans for future service provision?
- are we managing the working relationship effectively, with the right intelligent customer skills?
- is the exit strategy and arrangements for re-tendering still appropriate?
- are we actively learning from experience and setting maturity targets?

Queensland Government

Introducing the Gateway review process

What are Gateway reviews?

Gateway reviews employ a small team of independent experts to examine major programs or projects at key decision points. They help identify opportunities to improve the delivery of programs and projects and to ensure the best possible outcome.

Reviews occur at six points (or Gates) throughout the program or project's lifecycle to ensure that it is well positioned to enter its next phase. The use of external experts provides a fresh, independent perspective on the program or project. Gateway reviews are not an audit, technical review or an inquiry, but a third-party review by experienced individuals acting for the benefit of the program and project.

Gate o is targeted at programs and can be repeated throughout the life of the program. Gates 1–5 are designed for projects.

Benefits of the Gateway process

Effectively managed and controlled programs and projects are essential to the successful delivery of the government's strategic objectives. Gateway reviews provide independent guidance to project owners, their teams and commissioning agencies by identifying risks and issues that may impact delivery.

Gateway reviews take advantage of the experience and expertise of government and private sector individuals who are independent of the agency, program and project. They provide a valuable and alternative perspective on the risks and issues confronting the project team while challenging the robustness of existing plans and processes.

For project owners, Gateway reviews provide them with a valuable perspective on the issues facing the program or project and achieving their business aims by helping them ensure that:

- programs or projects are ready to progress to the next stage of development or implementation
- all stakeholders fully understand both the current status and issues involved
- appropriate skills and experience are deployed on the program or project
- procurement is well managed in order to provide value for money
- realistic time and cost targets are developed and achieved.

What programs or projects are Gateway reviews applicable to?

Gateway reviews may apply to a wide range of programs or projects, including:

- policy development and implementation
- organisational change and other change initiatives
- acquisition programs and projects
- property/construction developments
- ICT-enabled business change.

The flexibility of the Gateway process allows it to be applied to any program or project being delivered under any project delivery framework.

Programs or projects may be nominated for a Gateway review by:

- project owners completing a risk profile model and forwarding it to the Gateway unit, Queensland Treasury and Trade
- agency Directors-General or Ministers
- as part of the program or project approval process.

The Gateway unit, Queensland Treasury and Trade may also approach project owners to discuss the benefits of undertaking a review.

The risk profile model can be downloaded at www.treasury.qld.gov.au/clients/government/gateway-review-process.shtml

How does a Gateway review work?

Each review goes through a similar sequence of activities, commencing with the project owner completing a risk profile model and concluding with the review team providing the project owner with a confidential report containing the review team's findings and recommendations.

Reviews are typically undertaken in four to five days by a review team of three or four experts who review the project documentation and hold interviews with key project personnel and stakeholders to gain their views on the issues and risks facing the program or project.

The review aims to produce candid and practical recommendations based on best practice.

Reviews are undertaken in a spirit of openness and a willingness to work together is essential to achieving a successful review report.

Gateway reviews as part of the overall delivery framework

Every agency will have its own structures and resources for carrying out internal reviews, health checks and audits of its activities, including programs or projects. Gateway reviews provide a snapshot view of the progress of a program or project at a point in time and, therefore, should complement internal processes, not replace them.

For Queensland Government, these benefits translate into the following key outcomes:

- reduced project cost and time overruns
- improved alignment of programs or projects with government strategic objectives
- increased investment confidence of government projects
- improving knowledge and skills across government staff through participation in reviews.

A Gateway review is not a substitute for a rigorous governance framework that manages an agency's key processes including:

- business planning
- investment appraisal and business case management (including benefits management)
- program and project management
- risk management
- procurement or acquisition
- service and contract management.

Role of the project owner

The project owner is the individual accountable for the success of the program or project and for ensuring that it meets its objectives and delivers the identified benefits.

A Gateway review is conducted on a confidential basis for the project owner, who is responsible for initiating the review and ensuring the project team and stakeholders support and work collaboratively with the review team.

The ownership of the review report rests with the project owner, who is accountable for the implementation of the recommended remedial action and the program or project's progression.

Role of the review team

The review team is made up of individuals from outside the agency, program or project and are selected for their relevant experience and expertise for that stage of the program or project.

The review team will work cooperatively and collaboratively with all review stakeholders and on the final day of the review, present the draft report to the project owner on the overall findings and recommendations.

The review team leader and members are contracted through the Gateway unit.

Being interviewed as part of a Gateway review

Interviewees may include government staff, consultants and key stakeholders involved in, or affected by, the program or project. Discussions between interviewees and the review team are confidential and no comments are attributed to individuals in the final review report. Reviews are undertaken in a spirit of cooperation and trust to the mutual benefit of the program or project. Interviewees are encouraged to work constructively with the review team and to provide frank and candid advice on the program or project. The review team will be interested in the interviewees views and their level of support for the program or project. Interviewees are encouraged to voice any concerns or issues they have relating to the program or project and the extent to which it supports their business objectives.

Further Gateway documentation

The Gateway unit has prepared documentation to assist those involved in reviews to better understand the process and fulfil their duties and responsibilities. A Gateway review guidebook provides further information on the process and will be of particular use to those embarking on a Gateway review.

Workbooks have been prepared for each Gateway review. The workbooks provide further guidance on:

- the structure of each review
- the areas of investigation and topics to be explored
- examples of the types of evidence the review team will be seeking.

These topics, and the examples of evidence required, should be regarded as indicative and not prescriptive within the overall objective of each review. The review team will consider whether additional or different topics need addressing and the corresponding evidence required. Approaches may vary according to the context of the program or project.

When a review is repeated, there will be variations in the emphasis of each review.

The wider context of the Gateway process

Policy design → Policy implementation → Policy maintenance → Policy review

Lesson learned

GATE 0 First program review
GATE 0 Mid-stage program review/s
GATE 0 Final program review

Program: Define program → Execute program → Close program

Project: Develop preliminary business case → Develop final business case and procurement strategy → Conduct competitive procurement → Award and implement contract → Manage facility/contract → Closure

GATE 1 Preliminary evaluation
GATE 2 Readiness for market
GATE 3 Investment decision
GATE 4 Readiness for service
GATE 5 Benefits realisation